

your love remains true

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by [theclingyduo](#)

Summary

Tubbo's- Tubbo's *here*, or at least a version of him is, and goddammit Tommy missed him so fucking much. He hovers his mouse over the stream, biting his lip nervously, before taking the leap and joining it.

And *fuck*, Tubbo looks so similar that Tommy thinks he might cry again.

He doesn't have horns, doesn't have the long hair that covers half his face, doesn't have the fucking *awful* scars that Tommy still hates himself for having let happen – but it's still unmistakably *him*. His smile's the same, he laughs the same – if a little brighter and less reserved – he brushes his hair back the same way and furrows his brows in concentration the same way and groans lightly in frustration the same way and-

It's not *him*, but it's still Tubbo, and Tommy can find himself loving this version of him already.

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(Or: Tommy, Tubbo, and Ranboo find themselves reincarnated into the bodies of their streamer selves, and learn to live in a world that, instead of being cruel, is kind to them.)

Notes

hi! so! this fic has been in the works for about a month, and it has utterly swallowed my mind. but it's FINALLY finished so i can start sharing it with you guys!

the premise is a little unique, so i'll explain it a little here: basically, in the DSMP canon, benchtrio all die in various tragic ways. they reincarnate into the bodies of their streamer selves. so tommy, tubbo, and ranboo are all their dsmp characters, but for the rest of the people, it's an irl fic. (so disclaimer: this fic is in no way speculating on any of the people involved, it is a work of fiction! if any creators state they're uncomfortable with this, it will be edited or taken down.)

i think that's it! dedicated to plant and aggie, who let me ramble to them about this for hours on end, to meri and honey and rat chat, whom i hate, and of course to ama, who's my #1 <3

hope you enjoy! :D

(edit 3.2024: though i'd like to, i can't edit wilbur out of this fic, but i just want to say: support shelby. fuck wilbur, fuck abusers, support victims. support shelby.)

last man standing

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Tubbo, wait- Tubbo, you *fucker!*”

Ranboo stifles a laugh as Tommy chases after Tubbo, who’d decided it would be hilarious to steal Tommy’s hat and promptly run away. Propping Michael up more securely on his hip, Ranboo leans against the doorframe, watching Tommy run around in circles. Ranboo admires Tommy’s persistence. Alas, it stands no chance against Tubbo’s sheer ability to outrun anything, especially if it’s funny.

Tommy catches sight of Ranboo first, and demands, “Ranboo, you bitch, help me!”

“Ranboo, if you help him, I’m divorcing you!” Tubbo shouts cheerfully. Ranboo laughs.

“Sorry, Tommy, you’re on your own,” Ranboo grins. Tommy flips him off without even looking at him. Ranboo makes his way to the couch, avoiding his still-running husband and best friend with ease and taking a seat on the couch.

He coos, “Bee and Tommy are so stupid, aren’t they, Michael?” Michael laughs and waves his arms a little bit, babbling in Piglin. Ranboo nods agreeably and perches Michael in his lap, returning to watching Tommy and Tubbo.

Just in time, apparently, as Tommy’s just gotten close enough to Tubbo to go, “You *bitch!*” and tackle Tubbo to the ground. Tubbo yelps, holding the beanie away from Tommy.

“You’re not gonna get it!” He declares, a laugh bubbling out as Tommy reaches towards it.

“Yes I *am!*”

“No you *aren’t-*”

Ranboo’s about to cut in teasingly, ready to roast Tommy or Tubbo or even both of them, but cuts himself off when he hears- something. He can’t quite pinpoint what it is – it sounds like ringing. A song, maybe? That wouldn’t make sense, though. There’s nothing nearby that could play that sort of tune, and Ranboo’s never heard it before so it’s unlikely it’s coming from the house.

He turns, question for Tommy and Tubbo on the tip of his tongue.

His question dies on his lips, though, when he sees Tubbo and Tommy, silent and curled up together and so, so small. They look so *afraid*. He scoops Michael up without a word, smoothing a soothing hand over his hair at the whimper he lets out, and kneels next to his best friends. “What’s wrong?” he asks, voice pitched loud to overwhelm the ever-louder ringing echoing around them.

Tommy buries his head in Tubbo's chest, still shaking. Ranboo reaches out to run a hand through his hair, aching to soothe his pain. Fear clenches in his chest as he looks to Tubbo, who scrunches his eyes shut. He's also trembling.

"Dream," Tubbo manages to choke out, eyes still closed. Ranboo's blood goes ice cold.

"W- what?" Ranboo breathes, barely able to hear himself over the blood rushing through his ears. Tubbo takes a shaky breath in, finally meeting Ranboo's eyes.

Tubbo repeats himself, somehow managing to keep his voice steady despite the way his hands are shaking. "Dream," he says. "He's out."

And Ranboo's world collapses down around him.

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They decide to stay in Snowchester. One, because moving around in unfamiliar land that Dream knows like the back of his hand is a "fucking stupid idea," in Tommy's words, and two, Tommy and Tubbo are so *done* with being scared and hiding.

Ranboo can't blame them. And this is their fight – as much as Ranboo worries, it's hardly his right to interfere.

Tubbo spends every day checking on their weapons, brewing potions and doing all he can to make sure they're ready. Tommy joins him, also grinding for armor and resources. And Ranboo- he does everything else, cooking and cleaning and making sure Tommy and Tubbo eat, because they definitely wouldn't do so otherwise.

He can't get them to sleep. It's not surprising, but it aches all the same.

In the end, it only takes a week for Dream to find them.

And, in the end, it takes less than five minutes once Dream finds them for the three to be disarmed and bloodied, waiting at the end of Dream's sword.

"You know what, Tommy?" Dream asks, a wild edge to his voice as he stands over the three of them. He's yet to replace his mask, so the wide, crazy look in his eyes is on full display. Tommy coughs, spitting blood to the side before glaring fiercely at Dream.

He hasn't lost his spark yet. Even as they're all about to die, Ranboo can't help but feel so insanely proud of his best friend.

Tommy spits out, "*What*, Dream?!"

"You're *done*!" Dream laughs, throwing his arms out wide. "You're so totally *finished*! I'm going to kill Tubbo, just like I should've done during the last fight. I'm going to kill Ranboo, too! And *then*, I'm going to kill you, so that you can watch it all happen and know that it's all *your* fault."

Tommy's eyes go wide, losing their fierceness, and suddenly, Tommy looks so small and so scared and so very seventeen. "No," he mutters, before he repeats louder, "No, Dream! You can't-"

"I can, and I will, *Tomathy*," Dream says cuttingly, and Tommy rears back as if stabbed. Tubbo's quiet. Ranboo glances at him, scrambling for his hand when he sees Tubbo's eyes wide and unseeing, his breathing coming much too fast.

Ranboo murmurs frantically, "Bee- Bee, stay with us. It'll-" Ranboo cuts himself off, because- it's not going to be okay. He can't say that.

It settles in then, sinking and cold, that this is the end.

Tommy's still muttering *no, no, no, no* from the other side of Tubbo. Ranboo can't reach him, can't comfort him, and it *hurts*. Dream laughs again. Ranboo *hates* him.

"You're finished!" He repeats again, and this time, Tommy forces himself up. He sways a bit, but stays strong.

Tommy repeats, low and desperate, "No- no, Dream." He raises his voice, not allowing Dream to speak. "I'll-" He takes in a deep, trembling breath. "Me for them," he states, clenching his fists. Ranboo gasps, his breath catching in his throat, and he feels Tubbo jolt beside him. "I- I won't fight. I won't do anything, you can do whatever you want with me. But please, *please*-"

Tommy glances over his shoulder at Ranboo and Tubbo. Desperation is all Ranboo can see swimming in his eyes.

"*Please* spare them," Tommy *begs*. Tubbo lets out a whimper. Ranboo wants to *cry*.

Dream stares at Tommy consideringly. Ranboo opens and closes his mouth multiple times, but nothing comes out, and before he knows it, Dream is stalking forward and ripping Tommy forward. Tommy lets out a yelp, but goes willingly.

"Y'know- I was gonna say no," Dream says casually, "But Tommy? Just this once, I'll grant your request."

Tommy's shaking, and looks so, so scared, but his shoulders slump in unmistakable relief. Ranboo's cheeks *burn* from tears, and he lets out a choked-off, "*Tommy*."

"Tommy, you *bastard*!" Tubbo yells, and he starts scrambling to get up. "Tommy, you *can't*-"

Tommy gives them a wry smile. "It's already done, big man," he says.

"Y'know, I'd like to tell you to put your things in a hole," Dream says conversationally. "For old time's sake."

Tommy closes his eyes and *whimpers*. Tubbo and Ranboo finally get on their feet, leaning on each other. Dream scoffs out a laugh, drawing his sword back. "Too bad you don't have

anything left,” he says savagely.

And in one, smooth motion, giving them no more time to react, Dream shoves his sword through Tommy’s back, out and through his chest.

The part of Ranboo that isn’t crying out in utter despair rages at the fact that Dream didn’t even have the decency to make Tommy’s death quick.

Dream disappears in the next instant, and it takes only seconds for Ranboo and Tubbo bolt upwards and make it to Tommy’s side. Ranboo gets there just in time.

“Tommy,” Ranboo breathes, horrified, catching him in his arms and lowering him carefully to the ground. “*Tommy.*” Tubbo sobs, clasping a hand over his mouth and dropping to his knees beside Tommy.

He pulls himself back together just as quickly, digging around frantically in his pockets- looking for potions, Ranboo’s sure. “I have to have- there has to be *something*,” Tubbo mutters frantically, eyes growing wider and more desperate as more time passes and he doesn’t find anything. Ranboo looks away, not able to bear watching the desperation on his husband’s face fall into despair.

Instead, he brushes the bloodied hair out off of Tommy’s forehead. Tommy’s eyes are focusing blearily on Tubbo. Haltingly, and looking like it’s just making him feel more pain, he reaches out and places his hand on top of Tubbo’s. Tubbo freezes. His eyes fall on Tommy. Tommy coughs, managing a small grin. “It’s no use, Tubs,” he forces out.

Tubbo seems to *break*, in that moment, and Ranboo can’t help but let out another broken sob. Tubbo turns his hand around and grasps desperately at Tommy’s hand in return. “I can’t do this without you, Toms,” he whispers. He brings his other hand to Tommy’s cheek; Tommy leans his face into it. Something in Ranboo’s heart clenches and *breaks*.

Tommy shakes his head. He glances at Ranboo, gaze softening and bringing up another hand to grab Ranboo’s with. “You’ll be fine,” Tommy promises. “You have each other.”

He coughs, then, and it comes out red. Ranboo echoes Tubbo’s choked sob with one of his own. Tommy grips their hands harder, eyes going wide and desperate, “I love you,” he rasps.

“We love you,” Ranboo responds through his tears, and Tubbo nods, clearly swallowing back another sob.

“Love you so, so much, Toms,” Tubbo repeats weakly.

Tommy smiles.

He closes his eyes. His grip goes slack.

And Ranboo and Tubbo *shatter*.

Life after Tommy is...dull. Quiet. Wrong, in every way.

Ranboo buries him. Tubbo would've, Ranboo's sure, but...Tubbo hasn't been himself, since Tommy died. Ranboo can't blame him. His other half is *gone*, and as much as Ranboo knows Tubbo loves him, Ranboo can't measure up to Tommy.

Tubbo spends all of his time in the workshop, now. He doesn't let Ranboo come in, and Ranboo can't help but worry. He makes sure to leave food by the door, though, and every time he comes back and the food lays untouched Ranboo's worry grows.

He only sees his husband when they're going to bed. Sometimes, not even then.

Ranboo doesn't know what to *do*.

When he's not worrying about Tubbo, Ranboo takes care of Michael, and cleans the house, and searches for resources, and does absolutely everything he can to distract himself from-everything. Tommy's gone. He'll never again light up the room with his laugh, never again smack Ranboo when he makes a bad pun, never again give Ranboo a hug or ruffle Tubbo's hair.

Ranboo's tear scars have never been deeper.

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Dream doesn't come back. Ranboo can only find a little bit of solace in the fact that Tommy's last sacrifice has actually seemed to work.

Tubbo still hasn't stopped working every waking hour. Ranboo's not giving up on trying, but-it hurts, seeing his husband like this. It hurts, and so he resolves to get Tubbo to rest.

It's been four months since Tommy died. Tubbo hasn't gone a day without working once.

"Tubbo," Ranboo begs, when they actually go to bed at the same time that night. "Please just-take a day off. Just one." Tubbo just looks at him dully. Ranboo reaches out and grasps Tubbo's hand. "Michael misses you," he says, voice dropping to a whisper. "I miss you."

Tubbo's gaze softens, just a bit, but his expression remains resolved. He grips Ranboo's hand back. "I need to keep working, Ranboo," he states. Working on *what*, Ranboo wants to ask, but he knows he won't be answered.

Ranboo looks down, playing with their joined hands. "I'm worried," he confesses. "You haven't been eating. You're always working. I'm- I'm *worried*, Tubbo."

Tubbo's silent, for a moment. Ranboo *really* wants to know what's running through his mind. "I'm fine, Ranboo," Tubbo finally says. He lays back, then, obviously shutting down the conversation, and Ranboo can't help but wilt. Tubbo cracks an eye open, though, and whispers, "Night, Boo. Love you."

Ranboo can't help but go soft at that, and he responds, "Love you, Bee."

A small smile plays at Tubbo's lips as he falls asleep. Ranboo can't help but feel relieved.

The next day, the workshop explodes. Ranboo tries to get inside, and eventually does, but it's too late.

Tubbo dies, and Michael cries, and Ranboo feels like a failure.

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He keeps going. For Michael, and for Tommy's sacrifice.

It's almost not enough.

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Eventually, Michael moves out. He still visits, sometimes, but Ranboo's on his own again.

All he can do is reread his book, day after day after day, and hope he hasn't already forgotten what's important.

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When Ranboo dies, he's alone.

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Tommy's eyes shoot open.

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"Ugh."

Eryn and Freddie glance upwards as Tommy stalks over to his seat next to Freddie, dropping into it and shoving his head into his hands. "Uh, you alright there, Tommy?" Eryn asks. Tommy glares blearily up at them, barely catching their concerned raise of the eyebrows.

He grumbles, "Just peachy." One of them lets out a sympathetic-sounding noise. Someone puts a hand on his back and starts rubbing soothing circles into it, and Tommy can't help but relax into it.

"You have another one of those dreams?" Freddie asks quietly. Tommy nods, head still in his arms. They both sigh above him.

Eryn must've come around to his side of the table, because an arm wraps around him from the other side. Tommy unwillingly leans into them, and Eryn murmurs, "You really should talk to someone about these, you know. They can't be healthy."

Tommy turns his head and gives Eryn a look. "They'd think I'm crazy," he grunts. "*You* guys don't even really believe me."

"We *do*," Freddie breaks in. Tommy glances up just in time to see them trade a look with Eryn over his head, and something heavy settles in his chest when Freddie continues hesitantly, "It's...a little weird," Tommy opens his mouth, and Freddie hurries to stress, "But we *do* believe you!"

"No, no, having super realistic visions about me being in another fucking life is pretty weird, I get that," Tommy grumbles, shoving his face back into his arms and ignoring everything else around him. His eyes feel heavy, and his heart *hurts*, and *fuck* he hates nights like these.

For as long as he can remember, he's been having- nightmares, dreams, visions, Tommy doesn't know what the fuck to call them. All he knows is that they fucking haunt him, and they're so *real* that each time he wakes up he has to remind himself that he doesn't live in whatever alternate reality he constantly dreams up.

When he was younger, he used to think his dreams were normal. Surely everyone dreamed up an entirely separate reality, an entirely separate *life* while they're asleep. But...he asked his parents. He asked his friends. He asked everyone he could if practically *imagining* a past life was normal, and everyone said no. Eryn and Freddie were the only ones that didn't look at him weird for months afterwards.

Eventually, he stopped asking.

Sighing, Tommy leans back and stares at the ceiling. Last night's dream was- actually *nice*, for once. It'd just been him and his two best friends in that life- *imagined* life just hanging out and having fun. (Tubbo and Ranboo. The details always fade, after a while, but he's never forgotten those two names.)

They were having a snowball fight.

It was nice.

Tommy sighs, suddenly feeling crushingly alone, even though he's surrounded by people and his two closest friends.

Freddie tugs him closer, and Tommy goes willingly. "I'm sorry," they murmur. Tommy shrugs, and leans his head on Freddie's shoulder. Eryn grasps his hand.

"Do you...do you miss them?" Eryn asks hesitantly, and Tommy's heart clenches. He blinks, hard, for a second. He can't cry. He doesn't- these people aren't even *real*. How can he miss them?

"Yeah," he whispers anyway, because he's nothing if not a fool. "Yeah. I do."

It's quiet, for a moment. "I'm sorry," Eryn repeats again helplessly. Freddie squeezes his shoulders. It's little comfort, at this point.

"s life, innit?" Tommy responds dully. The bell rings at that moment.

Freddie and Eryn stay with him until they have to part for their next class.

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"Tommy, hand me those."

Tommy blinks, looking up from his desk to meet his teacher's eyes. She stares at him, unimpressed, holding out a hand. Raising an eyebrow, she says, "Well?"

He stares back. She gestures towards his Pokémon cards, which he'd been laying out on his desk absently. Something cold settles in his gut.

"I'm sorry, Miss, I can put them away-"

"No. Give them to me." Her voice is cold and unyielding, and-

"Tommy, put your things in the hole."

"No, Dream, please- please, no-"

"Put. Your things. In the hole."

A memory- dream- nightmare- *something* slams into Tommy, and he straightens, staring into nowhere in particular. His chest hurts. His chest *hurts*. He faintly registers his breathing quickening and his hands shaking, and his vision is going black and *fuck* is this what dying feels like? Is he going to die? Is he-

"Tommy! Tommy!"

-and he rips himself out of it, gasping aloud.

He blinks rapidly, shaking his head, and taking deep breaths in an attempt to calm himself. He finds himself breathing in pattern – *"Deep breaths, Tommy. In for four; hold for seven, out for eight- there you go. You're doing great, Tommy, keep going."* He doesn't know where that came from, but it helps.

Eventually, he comes back to himself. The whole class is staring at him.

Mechanically, as if by muscle memory, he gathers the cards in his hands before holding them out towards his teacher. "Sorry, Miss," he manages to say, grinning nervously. His hands are still shaking. "Won't happen again."

She just stares at him, eyes wide.

“You...you can keep them,” she says faintly. A pause. “Tommy...” she trails off, “Tommy, are you alright?”

Tommy forces a grin. It probably looks as fake as it feels. “I’m fine, Miss,” he reassures, and it comes out flat. The teacher stares at him doubtfully for a moment, but in the end turns away. Tommy slumps in relief as soon as her eyes are off of him.

“Alright, then,” she says, and continues the lecture.

Tommy spends the rest of the class staring at the far wall, shoving down panic from the memories- *images* that can’t be real.

They *can’t* be.

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After that day, the nightmares only seem to grow worse. Before, Tommy...he got really vivid images, sure, but they were never as horrifying as fucking- seeing his pets die, or being beaten up, or even fucking *dying*. Before, he could fall asleep fairly easily if he was woken up by them. Now he can’t.

They’re solidifying in his head, too. At school, at home, asleep- he can’t stop *thinking* about them. They feel just as real as his life up until this point – just as real as his parents, as his school, as Eryn and Freddie. He *feels* like he’s lived through a war, as if he had a home and lost it. He feels like he knows Wilbur and Tubbo and Ranboo and *so many others* just as well as he knows his own family here.

Dying feels real, too. He can’t quite stand to be too close to hot surfaces anymore.

It’s not the same. He knows that, but the knowledge doesn’t stop him from flinching away anyway.

He can tell the people around him are getting worried, too. His parents are giving him increasingly worried looks every time he comes to the breakfast table with circles painted under his eyes, Eryn rarely leaves his side at school, Freddie comes over whenever they can. He wishes it were enough. It’s not.

As some sort of last-ditch effort before they make him start doing therapy, his parents suggest he finds a hobby. A *coping mechanism*, they say. Tommy thinks it sounds fake, but when he complains to Eryn and Freddie about it, they suggest he starts playing Minecraft. Which- okay, he guesses. It’s better than doing sports, so he guesses he’ll try it.

He plays it for the first time that night, and, shockingly, it helps.

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“HA! FUCK YOU, BITCH!”

Tommy cackles, knocking Eryn off into the void in Skywars. This is *fun*. It hasn’t gotten rid of his nightmares, but it helps relax him. It distracts him, helps him think about anything

other than explosions and holes and small, tight spaces. Instead it's blocks and fake swords and pissing off everyone around you. It's different. It's nice.

And, again, it's so fucking fun.

“Hey!” Eryn yelps. Tommy just laughs again. “That was uncalled for!”

“Sucks to suck, bitch!”

Eryn sighs, but Tommy knows him well enough to know even without seeing him that he's grinning. “You're a dick,” he informs Tommy.

Tommy snickers. “Just be better,” he suggests, and punches Eryn into the void again.

“TOMMY, YOU ASS!”

Tommy laughs, and for the first time in forever, it feels real.

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Tommy's not quite sure how it starts, but somehow, he gets into watching people play Minecraft.

He kind of floats around the different creators, never quite sticking to one. Everyone has a different style – some serious, some more relaxed, all funny in one way or another. Tommy can't help but think – what if *he* streamed or made videos? It'd be another distraction, and just be *fun* overall. The more he thinks about it, the more he likes the idea.

He puts a lid on it for now, but he thinks he could definitely get into it.

One day, he's absently clicking through streams, none of them quite catching his interest, when-

His eyes catch on a name, and he freezes.

Philza – Streaming Minecraft.

He shuts his eyes. Opens them again. The name is still there.

Restarts his PC. Opens the tab again, opens Twitch again, searches the name.

Still there.

Tommy's breathing quickens. He pushes back from his desk, vision tunneling around the PC, threading his fingers through his hair and tugging, hoping the pain will keep him grounded. It helps, thankfully, but he still lets out a whimper, eyes still fixed on that stupid, *stupid* name.

“Tommy, you gremlin, get back here!”

“Tommy, I couldn't have done anything about Wil. If anyone could've helped him, it would've been you.”

“Tommy, you betrayed Techno. You sided with the government. We’re clearly not on the same side anymore.”

“Tommy, put a little trust in Wil, will you? He’s fine. Just be grateful he’s alive again.”

Tommy shakes his head, jerking himself from his memories. *In and out*, he reminds himself, closing his eyes and breathing deeply until his head stops spinning and he can see clearly again. He opens his eyes back up, after a moment, and collapses back in his chair, suddenly exhausted.

Philza. The man who, in his dreams, killed Wilbur. Who was Technoblade’s best friend, who destroyed Tommy’s home and didn’t give a single shit about Tommy before or after he died. The man who had wings larger than life, who’s supposedly lived thousands upon thousands of years.

The man who...who Tommy always hoped would be his father, like he was to Wilbur. It never happened, of course, no matter how Tommy never stopped hoping. Tommy always was too naïve about stuff like that.

Tommy shakes himself once again. *They’re not real*, he reminds himself. They’re not real. They’re stupid, ridiculously complex figments of Tommy’s imagination. Tommy must’ve- he must’ve seen Philza’s name at some point before this, and that’s why he features in Tommy’s dreams. That’s all it is.

That’s all it can be.

He just breathes, for a moment, forcing himself to *stop freaking out*. Eventually, he works up the courage to sit up, to move his chair back to his desk and look a little closer at the name.

Hesitant, he clicks onto the stream, and the first thing he hears is *“I am not going to jump into lava just to ‘test my armor,’ you chaotic shits!”*

Despite himself, Tommy snorts, and something coiled deep inside of him eases.

He expects to want to click away immediately, but something about Philza – *Phil*, his chat calls him, again far too similar – is soothing. He’s working on a hardcore world he’s apparently had for four years now, which is *insane*. He’s similar enough to the Philza from Tommy’s dreams that part of him remains wary, but he also seems so *different*.

He’s laid back, cracks grin easily and indulges his chat, even when they tease him. He laughs at almost everything and is naturally entertaining. It’s similar, but different enough that Tommy can disconnect them in his mind.

It’s a coincidence, anyway, Tommy reminds himself. They’re not the same person. They’re not.

Tommy avoids following Philza anyway.

-

In the end, Tommy decides to start streaming.

It's easy to choose the name *TommyInnit* as his username. It honestly feels a lot more *him* than Tom Simons ever did. There's a reason he always asked to be referred to as Tommy, instead of Tom, he supposes.

He starts off with practically no viewers, which is to be expected, obviously. It's fun, like he expected, playing up the more chaotic parts of him and having people *enjoy* it. Hearing people refer to him as TommyInnit, too, feels *far* more right than he ever thought it would.

Not for the first time, he feels like his "made-up" memories are more real than he ever could've imagined.

It's nice. It's really nice. It helps distract him from everything, and- it doesn't do much for his nightmares, but he does find himself sleeping more easily.

He thinks he could get used to this.

-

"Hello, boys!"

Tommy laughs, heart lightening and grin widening at the sight of his viewers swarming in, flooding his chat with *hiiii tommy* and *ayyyy my streamer's here* and everything similar. He loves that people are actually *excited* to see him stream.

He finishes off his coke, and says, "Boys, I have a special one for you today." He waits for the excitement to flood the chat, and then continues, "I invited – now, don't get too excited, but I invited one of my *school* friends to join us today!"

Said school friend breaks in, tone exasperated in the way that Tommy knows means he's grinning, "You are *so* dramatic, Tommy."

"Eryn!" Tommy cheers, ignoring the light dig. "How are you, my friend?"

Eryn sighs. "Better before I joined this VC," they snark. Tommy rears back exaggeratedly.

He gasps, "You should be *honored* to find yourself in my presence, Eryn." He's grinning.

"I get quite enough of you while we're in school, thank you very much."

"Now that's just *hurtful*."

Eryn shrugs. "Suck it up, I guess."

Tommy rolls his eyes, heart feeling lighter already. He'd had a *really* rough nightmare, that night, but this is already making him feel better. "Yeah, yeah, enjoy your free *bullying TommyInnit* time, I guess."

"I will, thank you!"

“Oh, *fuck* you.”

All Tommy can hear his friend's laughter, and he grins, despite himself.

-

“Do you want to be a hero, Tommy? Do you want to be a hero?”

No, Tommy thinks desperately, flinging out a hand beside him and grasping Tubbo's when it meets his own. No, he doesn't want to be a hero, he just- he just wants his home back. He never wanted to be a hero. He never-

Technoblade doesn't seem to give a shit about that, doesn't seem to give a single fuck that he just lost his brother, and lets out a roar. “Then die like one!”

“No-” Tommy yells, as if their fate isn't already sealed. “No, Techno, do-”

“-n't!” Tommy gasps, shooting up in bed. His- his head's spinning, and he can't seem to get enough air in, and his chest *hurts*, and-

He lets out a quiet, gasping sob, stuffing his fist into his mouth. His teeth dig in, hard, the pain helping to draw him out of the uncontrollable *panic* he always finds himself in after one of these nightmares. Tears run down his cheeks unchecked. He swipes impatiently at them, and just wants to cry more when that doesn't help.

It feels like *every fucking night*, now, he's having one of these *horrible* dreams. Whether it's holding Wilbur's dead body after everything, to being exiled from the nation he gave everything for, to watching his home get blown up, to fucking *dying* – they're all horrible.

It's a wonder he sleeps at all, now.

The most horrible one is watching Tubbo – watching his *best fucking friend* – get trapped in a box and executed. His deaths, they're horrible, but it's *nothing* like being totally helpless when the most important person in his life (in *that* life) gets brutally murdered right in front of him.

He can't do *anything*, and it always hurts worse than anything Tommy could've ever imagined.

Tommy sighs, burying his face in his hands, and wants to scream. He- he doesn't know what these fucking memories are from, but he does know that he'd quite like them to stop *haunting* him like this.

Groaning, Tommy forcefully shakes himself from his memories. He drags himself out of bed, dropping down at his PC.

There's no way in hell he's gonna get back to sleep. He may as well play some Minecraft.

-

Tommy streams, later that night. He tends to do that, when the day's been unequivocally shitty – it distracts him, when nothing else can, and Tommy needs that distraction a little extra tonight. He checks the front page of Twitch, mildly curious. His viewer count seems rather high for the night – maybe a few of the other streamers that are normally streaming around this time aren't around?

Tabbing over while waiting for another round of Bedwars to start, Tommy scrolls absently past the dozens of currently-live streamers, making quips all the way to keep his chat entertained. It doesn't look like many people at all are live – which explains the significant rise to his own viewership. Huh.

Well, he'll be sure to make the best of it. Tommy scrolls back up the page, barely glancing at the other streamers as he makes to tab back over to his own streaming page and keep on playing. Except-

Tommy's eyes catch on a name, and he freezes.

Wait a fucking second.

He faintly registers his eyes going wide, hand going slack on the mouse, before his shock overwhelms him. He spews out his coke, coughing violently. "S- sorry, chat-" he manages to choke out, barely registering chat's alarm on his second monitor. "Gonna pause for a bit- technical difficulties-"

Without another word, he scrambles to turn his screen black and mute his audio entirely, minimizing all of his applications and making Twitch as big as he can.

Returning frantically to where he'd been, he checks the recommended streamers once again, looking closer this time. It takes a bit of searching, a frantic number of seconds of wondering *was that really-* before-

He sees it.

Instantly, his eyes burn with tears.

Right there, at the very bottom of his recommended streamers, is-

Tubbo – Streaming Minecraft.

Chapter End Notes

thank you so much for reading! i'll be updating every sunday & wednesday, so be sure to subscribe if you enjoyed <3

(also, join this super awesome [fic discord server](#) that one of my friends made and say sarah sent you!! it's a lot of fun and there's a lot of really talented writers there <3)

(also also shout-out to honey for letting me complain about tagging for like a half hour
love you <3)

mirror image

Chapter Summary

“Fuck,” the streamer whines pitifully, “I was *so close* to winning that one, too!”

Tubbo’s eyes shoot open, and his hand flails, knocking his laptop almost clear off the bed. With a muffled curse, he scrambles to catch it before it hits the ground. Tubbo places it down gently, and then just- stares.

Because...on that screen is the fucking *mirror image* of one of the boys he’s been dreaming about for as long as he can remember. He never, never, *never* lets himself think about them much while he’s awake. He does his best to just push them aside, to just leave them at the back of his mind where they belong because he’ll never see them again, because they’re *gone*- no, no. No, it’s because they never existed in the first place.

But, Tubbo thinks, staring at the screen and tearing up despite himself, he seems *so very real*.

Tommy – and even before looking at the banner across the top of the screen, he *knows* his name – looks almost exactly the same. He’s cleaner, and his smile looks more real, and he just looks *brighter* than when Tubbo had last seen him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I’m sorry, Tubbo, I promise I’ll make this as painless and colorful as possible.”

No, Tubbo thinks, mouth refusing to form words. No, no, no, please-

Boom.

Tubbo shoots up in bed, chest heaving. He looks around wildly for a second, eyes rapidly cataloguing everything they can in his room. When he sees that there’s nothing there that can hurt him, he relaxes, falling back into his bed with a groan. He turns over to check the time. It’s barely three in the morning.

He sighs.

Silently, he stands, knowing he’s not going to fall back asleep any time soon. He pads towards the kitchen, getting a glass of water, then sits down at the dining room table, letting his head fall into his arms. His shoulders are trembling, he knows. He can’t stop it. He doesn’t have the energy to try.

Fuck, he *hates* this. He hates having these nightmares practically every *single* night, hates knowing that absolutely nobody else has them, hates knowing that something's *wrong* with him. No one else dreams about a whole-ass new life, especially not one where they die constantly and betray their best friends and lose their homes. And- even if they did, there's no way they'd remember it for every day after.

Ender. He's so fucked up.

'Course, that doesn't stop his nightmares from *feeling* real. Bringing his hand up to his face, he traces over his cheeks, just...checking, making sure that he hasn't suddenly manifested those horrible, horrible scars he's seen in his reflection before. He chuckles humorlessly, dropping his hand and resting his head in his hands. Sometimes the dreams repeat, but this had been a new one.

At least he knows how dream-him got those scars, now.

Something drops down onto the table in front of him. Tubbo looks down, and- ah. He's crying. He rubs absently at his eyes; the tears don't stop. If anything, they speed up.

Tubbo forces himself to take in a deep breath; lets it out slowly. Breathes for another couple of minutes, until his tears have finally dried up and his shoulders have stopped shaking. His hands haven't, yet. He forces them into fists, and pretends it helps.

Mechanically, he rises from the table, shoving the memories- *nightmares* down deep, forcing himself to forget about them. They don't matter. They're not real. They don't matter.

They don't matter.

Tubbo returns to his room, pretends to sleep, and fails to push everything away.

-

Tubbo starts growing out his hair.

He can't quite understand himself why suddenly seeing the skin around his eyes and down his cheeks feels *wrong* all of a sudden. But- it does, and he keeps on growing it out. It feels natural; he forces himself to disregard the implications of just *why* that is.

He's been doing that a lot lately.

His family notices, of course. None of them really *care*, but one day comes the request that Tubbo really should've been expecting.

"Toby! *Toby!*"

Tubbo glances up at Lani's call, raising an eyebrow at her expectant stare. "Yes, Lani?" He asks.

"Your hair's super long!" She states. Tubbo nods, lips twitching. Lani's always managed to somehow make his days brighter.

He replies, "It sure is." Lani's face splits into a massive grin.

"Let me braid it!"

This time, both eyebrows shoot up. "You want to braid my hair?" He confirms slowly, and Lani nods excitedly.

"It'd be really pretty!"

There's really no reason for Tubbo to refuse, so he shrugs and takes a seat in front of the couch. "Sure, go for it, Lani."

His little sister squeals in joy, perching behind him without another word. Tubbo's prepared to have his hair yanked out – Lani's far from the careful sort, especially when she gets excited. It's a pleasant surprise when instead, she runs her fingers through his hair gently, parting it and threading the strands together with only little spikes of pain.

It actually feels nice, and it doesn't take long for Tubbo to find himself sinking back into the touch, leaning against the couch.

Unbidden, a thought crosses Tubbo's mind.

Man, I missed this. Tommy always loved braiding my hair.

Tubbo's eyes go wide, and he shakes his head unconsciously. Lani smacks the back of his head lightly, scolding, "Stay *still!*" Tubbo murmurs an apology, mind still racing.

Where the hell did that come from?

He- there's no one named Tommy in his life. The only Tommy he would've heard of is, well-

A loud, wheezing laugh. "Tubso, you're so ridiculously stupid sometimes." An arm wrapped around his shoulder; a bright grin. "I guess that's why you've got me."

The Tommy from the memories that don't exist.

Something heavy settles in his gut, and his shoulders wind up tight. It takes barely a second for Lani to pause in her motions and lean over his shoulder, concerned. "I'm not hurting you, am I?" she asks worriedly, and there's something so *wrong* about the question that the unease only grows.

"Tubbo, fuckin' relax, I'm not killing you, here." Even so, the fingers running through his hair grow a little more gentle.

He shakes himself out of it, murmuring, "Yeah, I'm fine, keep going." Lani hums doubtfully, but when he breathes deeply and lets the tension in his shoulders unwind, she keeps going.

She finishes the braid, clapping happily. "Go look," she urges, and he laughs slightly, letting her shove him towards the bathroom.

The braid looks- pretty good, actually. He says so. Lani looks delighted, and practically skips out of the bathroom. He watches her, fond. But, when he turns back towards the mirror and looks at it again, it feels like...it feels like there's something missing.

Something cold settles in his chest. He turns away.

(He feels lonely.)

-

It's after another nightmare that Tubbo discovers Minecraft.

He's just mindlessly surfing the internet, looking for *anything* to distract him from- *explosions and screams and far, far too much death*- from his horrible, horrible imagination. Normally he goes on YouTube and just watches cat videos until he falls asleep, but he'd heard something about a website called Twitch a couple of days ago, and, well. Why not try something new? It's not like it's likely to help, anyway.

He instantly regrets it when the first channel he sees when he opens the site is *Philza – Streaming Minecraft*.

His mouse shoots towards the *close* button. He closes it, and just...stares at the screen, for a moment. He didn't just see that. Did he? He couldn't have. It- it doesn't make *sense*.

Philza Minecraft – Phil – is a figment of his delusions. He's a person his fucked-up brain came up with for *some* reason. He's not just this- this *streamer*, a normal person living a normal life. He's not. He can't be.

Against his better judgement, he clicks back into his browser, and hesitantly types in Twitch again. Sure enough, Philza is still there.

He- he can't bring himself to click into the stream. He should, if not to confirm that the person he imagined and the apparently *real* person aren't remotely similar, but he can't bring himself to. Not when-

"Tubbo, L'Manberg was rotten from the start. It deserved to be destroyed – you should just accept it, and move on."

Not when his words- *fake* words- still haunt Tubbo's nightmares.

Instead, he scrolls down the page, the tightness in his chest loosening slightly as there are no more recognizable names. Thank fuck. He's not sure that he'd be able to handle it if he saw fucking *Technoblade* in his life - his real, normal, *not dreamed-up* life. Or Dream. Especially Dream.

Actually, they're both pretty fucking bad.

He clicks on an innocuous stream – Minecraft again. It's strangely relaxing. They're doing the incredibly monotonous task of cutting down trees, but the cadence of the streamer's voice and the consistency of the moments shockingly are enough to lull Tubbo to sleep.

It's the first night in ages he doesn't wake up with some new memory that isn't his.

He keeps on watching Minecraft streams.

-

One day, Tubbo falls asleep watching a stream. It's habit, at this point – it's not like the streams do anything, really, to lessen his nightmares, but it helps when he has something to think about before he falls asleep.

So, it's not surprising that he falls asleep. What *is* surprising, though, is that he wakes up to the sound of someone yelling “*FUCK!*” at the top of their lungs right into his ears. Tubbo blinks awake, startled, but then sighs in annoyance. Dammit, why'd this loud-as-fuck streamer have to wake him up *now*?

His laptop's resting just to the side of him, so he reaches over towards the power button, intent on turning it off and going the fuck to sleep. But, then-

“Fuck,” the streamer whines pitifully, “I was *so close* to winning that one, too!”

Tubbo's eyes shoot open, and his hand flails, knocking his laptop almost clear off the bed. With a muffled curse, he scrambles to catch it before it hits the ground. Tubbo places it down gently, and then just- stares.

Because...on that screen is the fucking *mirror image* of one of the boys he's been dreaming about for as long as he can remember. He never, never, *never* lets himself think about them much while he's awake. He does his best to just push them aside, to just leave them at the back of his mind where they belong because he'll never see them again, because they're *gone*- no, no. No, because they never existed in the first place.

But, Tubbo thinks, staring at the screen, tearing up despite himself, he seems *so very real*.

Tommy – and even before looking at the banner across the top of the screen, he *knows* his name – looks almost exactly the same. He's cleaner, and his smile looks more real, and he just looks *brighter* than when Tubbo had last seen him. Tubbo closes his eyes, presses the heels of his hands into them and keeps them there until he's seeing stars. He shakes his head wildly, because- it's all coming back, now.

It's all-

“*C'mere, Tubbo! I have something really cool to show you.*”

“*Tubbo! Tubs, Tubso, Big T, I have such a great story to tell you.*”

“*It's me and you versus Dream, man.*”

“*Tubbo, stay close.*”

“*Tubbo-*”

All his life, he's been pushing these ~~memories~~ *images* aside, not giving them the time of day. He researched, a bit, when he first realized just how abnormal these types of dreams were, but nothing ever came up that wasn't concerning. He figured he was just crazy.

But with Philza, and now- and now Tommy, too, all of those dreams seem so startlingly *real*.

He brings his hands up to his cheeks, and there's still no scars, but for a moment he can just *imagine* the feeling of burning. Of fear, of devastation, of pure, unbridled pain. And when he looks back at the screen, he almost expects to see blood-crusted hair- see dull, blue eyes- see a smile forever etched- see-

"Tommy- Tommy, Tommy no, Tommy please-"

"Tubbo, he's- he's gone."

"No! Toms- Toms please, please wake up. Please."

Tubbo lets out a gasping sob, and presses a hand over his mouth, fighting desperately to keep the tears back. No, no, it's not real. It's not-

He forces himself to look back at the screen, and almost instantly, a wave of relief crashes over him. Tommy's there, real and loud and so, so beautifully *alive* that it's almost enough to send him into another wave of tears. He never thought he'd see him alive again. He- he's never met Tommy in this life. He knows this. But-

Why does everything he ever imagined feel so integral to him, all of a sudden?

He's not just Tubbo, he's Tubbo Underscore, former president of L'Manberg. He's not, but he *is*, and it's so overwhelming that for a moment all Tubbo can think to do is focus on his breathing. In, out, in, out, in, out.

Tommy's still talking, laughing about something he's just done, and Tubbo sinks back into his bed, something bone-deep, something he never knew was tense, finally relaxing. He watches Tommy, watches his wild gestures and bold, bright grin, and his heart settles, finally slowing down.

He falls asleep to the sound of his timeless best friend yelling, and he feels just a little more at peace.

-

After that day, Tubbo decides to get into playing Minecraft.

He's still...he's not entirely sure, still, that these memories aren't just signs of his madness, but ever since he saw that stream, the memories seem to have cemented in Tubbo's mind. They're just as real as his life with his parents, with Lani; he feels just as much affection for Tommy and Ranboo as he does for his little sister.

It's weird, but it also feels right, shockingly enough.

He gets into the habit of watching Tommy whenever he streams, dropping everything just to watch him most of the time. It soothes something he didn't even know was aching inside him – seeing who may have been his best friend laughing so freely, playing with his friends and smiling so brightly. It aches, not being with him, but then again, he has a plan for that.

While watching, 95% of the time he can, Tubbo's also playing Minecraft. He's getting as good as he can as quickly as he can, so that he can start streaming. He'll be able to start streaming, and hopefully, *hopefully*, that'll lead to him being able to reach out to Tommy. He knows that Tommy doesn't know him, of course, but Tubbo still wants to talk to him.

It's not *his* Tommy, but he's still a version of Tubbo's best friend, and so Tubbo thinks that he could grow to love him all the same.

Tubbo probably jumps into things way too quickly, but less than a month after he starts playing Minecraft the first time, he resolves to start streaming. Tommy's climbing higher and higher up the streamer ladder, and Tubbo can't risk being left behind.

Everything gets set up, he gets good-luck wishes from his parents and Lani, who don't *quite* understand why he's doing what he's doing but are relieved all the same. He takes a deep breath. (Or five, or ten- he's *really* fucking nervous about this, okay.)

And then, he opens Streamlabs and Twitch, and starts streaming.

-

Streaming is *terrifying*.

Tubbo doesn't know how people do it and sound so *calm* all the time – he feels like he's on the verge of a panic attack all the time. And at first his only viewer is *Lani* – Tubbo can't imagine having more viewers than like, five, maximum, nevertheless the tens that Tommy pulls on a regular basis.

More people start coming to his streams. It doesn't get any less nerve-wracking, but Tubbo does find himself getting more confident, and more than that, he's having *fun* with this. Which is good, because he's probably gonna be stuck doing this for a while.

He streams every day. It doesn't feel like enough. Tommy's streaming a little less, but still fairly often, and he still hasn't noticed Tubbo. It's not surprising, but Tubbo has to keep fighting the urge to lose hope – fight the thought that he'll never make it high enough to reach out to Tommy and have him notice him.

Plus, Tommy probably doesn't even *remember* him – why would he want to be friends with a no-name streamer, anyway? No, Tubbo needs to keep climbing the ranks, and then maybe, *maybe*, Tommy'll notice him.

One day, though, the unthinkable happens.

Tubbo's streaming, as he does, and playing Hypixel, as he does. When, suddenly, he glances over at his chat, and- he freezes.

That's Tommy.

That's *Tommy* in his chat- and oh *fuck* there's a raid alert.

Holy *fuck*.

Tommy's spamming in his chat, yelling for everyone to follow him, and Tubbo feels like he can't *breathe*. He reminds himself, *no, you can't cry, you can't cry, you're live you idiot*, and stammers something about his follower count skyrocketing. Which, honestly, is the *last* thing he cares about right now, because Tommy finally finally *finally* noticed him.

The most important thing is that fact. The most important thing is that Tommy's asking Tubbo if he can join Tommy's discord server, and- this is all Tubbo's dreamed of, for the past couple of months since he discovered Tommy again.

He can't believe it.

He finishes the stream feeling like that, like he's in an alternate reality, like this isn't real. But it is, because immediately after he's done streaming, Tommy messages him.

hey, he says, adding on a smiley face at the end. *that was a really good stream. you're funny!*

It's almost too impersonal – it feels weird, not having Tommy making fun of him. Tommy doesn't know him in this reality, Tubbo reminds himself. He can't be expected to react the way Tubbo would've thought he would. He's probably going to be polite for a while-

of course, not as funny as i am at all times, comes through a bit later, and Tubbo bursts out laughing.

Now *that's* more like that Tommy he knows- knew.

Thanks, he replies, hoping his dryness shows through. He stares at the screen for a moment, all of a sudden at a loss for what to say. *Thanks for the raid!* he decides on. It's woefully boring, but it's all he can think of.

yea, no problem, Tommy responds, seemingly tossing away all formalities. Tubbo relaxes and does the same.

you're also funny, he sends, tacking on *:D* at the end. Tommy's typing immediately, and Tubbo grins, relaxing back into his bed.

They message all night, and Tubbo already feels a little more like he's home.

-

Tommy's *definitely* been on his technical difficulties screen for *far* too long.

He can't help it, though. Tubbo's- Tubbo's *here*, or at least a version of him is, and goddammit Tommy missed him so *fucking* much. He hovers his mouse over the stream, biting his lip nervously, before taking the leap and joining it.

And *fuck*, Tubbo looks so similar that Tommy thinks he might cry again.

“Tommy, come look at this! I found some bees!”

“Oh my god, Tommy, you can be so annoying sometimes.”

“Toms- hey, I’ve got you. We’ll get through this together.”

“I’m right here, Tommy.”

“Yeah. Me and you against Dream.”

He doesn’t have horns, doesn’t have the long hair that covers half his face, doesn’t have the fucking *awful* scars that Tommy still hates himself for having let happen – but it’s still unmistakably *him*. His smile’s the same, he laughs the same – if a little brighter and less reserved – he brushes his hair back the same way and furrows his brows in concentration the same way and groans lightly in frustration the same way and-

It’s not *him*, but it’s still Tubbo, and Tommy can find himself loving this version of him already.

But, Tommy thinks, his rapidly-growing smile tipping a little downwards, this Tubbo doesn’t know him. He, most likely, would just be overwhelmed if Tommy came right out the gate and acted like they already knew each other; he’d be a little weirded out, and probably would just push him off. That’s what Tubbo does when he’s uncomfortable – pushes it all away. Tommy would guess that’s probably the same with this Tubbo.

Still, Tommy has to do *something*.

So, he collects himself as quickly as he can, drinking some water and making sure there’s no redness around his eyes and on his cheeks. He restarts his stream, an apology and half-baked excuse all he gives to his viewers before he jumps right back into streaming. Keeping Tubbo’s stream open on his second monitor and checking once in a while to make sure he’s not going to end, Tommy goes through a few rounds of Skywars just to get his chat back on track, before he starts wrapping up his stream.

And then, he says, “Alright, chat! I’m gonna go ahead and send you off to a new streamer I found the other day – be sure to stick around, he’s fun!”

His chat spams their agreement, and he forces himself to grin lightly, starting the raid. And-well, the rest is history.

He spams in the chat, demanding everyone follow Tubbo. Tubbo stammers, endearingly flustered with the attention, looking almost *overjoyed* to see Tommy in his chat. Tommy considers, for a split-second, that he could be excited for the same reasons Tommy is. He shoves that thought away immediately- it’s not him. Tommy shouldn’t fool himself into thinking otherwise.

Instead of dwelling on it, Tommy starts spamming for Tubbo to join his discord. Tubbo laughs and says that he will, and it’s so familiar and *him*. Ender, Tommy missed him.

Tommy sticks around for the rest of the stream, and immediately after, as soon as Tubbo joins the discord, Tommy messages him. After a bit with no response, he types up something a little more teasing, a little less polite. Despite how excited he was – and is – to do this, a pit of nervousness settles in his stomach as he sends the message. Because- what if Tubbo *doesn't* want to talk? What if they can't be friends again? What if-

Tubbo responds right away. The pit dissolves immediately, and Tommy smiles. His responses are somehow exactly how Tommy pictured them. The conversation flows easily.

Tommy wonders why he was ever nervous.

-

Tubbo and Tommy talk all night and pick right back up where they left in the morning, and it's like part of Tommy that's been missing this whole time finally slots back into place.

It's nice. It's so, *so* nice to finally be able to talk to his best friend again. Tubbo's different, in some ways, a little more reserved than before, but there's so much that's the same that it's easy to fall into the same patterns they used to have.

Somehow, it's like they already know each other. On Tommy's end, it makes sense – he knows Tubbo's tells, knows when he's pushing a little too hard or goes a little too far with a bit and needs to reel it back. He knows how to make Tubbo smile and what sort of joke is likely to make him want to murder something, and he uses that to his full advantage.

But- likewise, it's like Tubbo already knows *him*, too. Tubbo knows *exactly* what sort of comebacks he needs for Tommy's teasing. He knows what little things will make Tommy laugh until he's about to piss himself, how to get Tommy out of his slumps and make him smile again. When Tubbo's retorts hit a little close to home or are just a little too sharp, Tubbo knows exactly what to say to make it all better again.

It's not the same. It makes Tommy feel at home anyway.

They start calling, too, pretty much every day. For hours and hours and hours, they just *talk*, about school, about streaming, about Minecraft, about anything at all. Tommy's cheeks always hurt from grinning so much, and there's multiple times he's been collapsed over his desk, laughing his ass off, with Tubbo sitting there on the other side of the screen just smiling smugly at him.

Of course, he's done the same to Tubbo, multiple times. And it's always hard to end call, even though Tommy knows that they'll just be back on call within a few hours.

A couple of weeks later, they're best friends in this reality, too. Tommy still has the nightmares, of course, but everything seems brighter with Tubbo finally here.

(It still feels like something's missing, but for now, this is enough.)

-

Eryn's gotta admit, he's always been a little worried about Tommy.

How could he not be? From the very moment they met, Tommy's always been...different. Weighted down. Haunted, by something nobody but Tommy could pretend to understand. It hadn't changed anything for Eryn, the dreams, but it has made them worry more about Tommy than they would've liked to have had to.

Especially in recent months, Tommy's just seemed to be getting worse and worse and *worse*. He's had dark circles being practically constant under his eyes – he doesn't seem to be sleeping at *all* – and he's talking more and more about having increasingly vivid, increasingly *real* flashes of memory.

Eryn's not quite sure what to think about the memories, but he does believe Tommy. His best friend's never been the lying sort, and the sort of weariness Tommy's carried for as long as they can remember is unlike anything he's seen before. Despite everything that makes sense, Eryn believes Tommy.

He and Freddie were honestly getting very close to the point of finding help for Tommy, too, but-

A couple of weeks ago, something changed. One day, Tommy showed up to school, and he was just *beaming*. He didn't stop smiling all day, looking down at his phone and looking like he was struggling not to laugh the whole time. It was such a jarring change, and had Eryn blinking at Tommy across the room for a solid ten seconds the first time he burst into laughter in the middle of the teacher speaking.

He and Freddie had met eyes, and both shrugged, equally confused. Something loosened in Eryn's shoulders, though, and he found himself grinning a little more easily that day, too.

Now, they're all sitting at lunch, and Tommy's again on his phone. He grins at something on it, typing out a response. It's only a few seconds later that he cackles, almost falling out of his seat from the force of his laughter.

Eryn watches, slightly confused, but mostly fond.

Freddie leans over. "I think this is the happiest we've ever seen him," Freddie murmurs, soft smile tugging at his lips. Eryn grins, crossing his arms and leaning back.

"Yeah," they say. "Yeah, I think so too." He raises his voice. "Hey, Tommy, want to share the joke with the class?"

"Fuck no!" Tommy shoots back cheerfully. He raises his head and smiles at them, all teeth. "This is for me and me alone."

"Fair enough, fair enough," Eryn allows, laughing a bit. Tommy just grins again, and returns to looking back at his phone. Eryn's curious, almost painfully so, but he lets this be.

Tommy's happy. Tommy's happy, and that's all that really matters.

thanks for reading! hope you enjoyed and see you sunday <3

realization

Chapter Summary

Tommy takes in a sharp breath, and straight up *blubbers*, “He- he was there- I died but he could- could’ve kill- killed you still and-” Tommy lets out another sob, “Thank *ender* you’re alive.”

And Tubbo-

Tubbo freezes, mind straight-up going blank for a second. Tommy- Tommy just-

Tears of his own welling up, Tubbo brings his free hand up to his mouth. Oh.

Oh.

Chapter Notes

this chapter contains one of my favorite scenes for the whole fic :D hope you enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Hello, boys!”

Tubbo watches Tommy lean back in his chair, hand wrapped around his typical coke bottle. He grins, and relaxes back also. This is the first time they’ve ever streamed together, and Tubbo will admit – he’s excited. These past few weeks have been the best of Tubbo’s life – they’ve slipped into the dynamic Tubbo remembers so *well*. It feels like nothing’s changed, even though everything has.

This is nice. Tubbo thinks he could get used to it.

Tommy grins, and continues. “Now, boys, we have a *very* special guest joining us here today-”

“Wow, you flatter me, Tommy,” Tubbo can’t help but cut in, breaking his silence. Tommy snickers and retorts back immediately, just like Tubbo knew he would.

“I mean, I can insult you if you *want*, Tubbo-”

“I think I’ll pass – your insults are rather sad, anyway. It really wouldn’t do you much good.”

Tommy gasps. “Tubbo! That’s so *mean* – my insults are *great*, thank you.”

Tubbo shrugs, grinning benignly. “If you say so, Tommy.”

“Well,” Tommy huffs. Tubbo can see he’s on the verge of laughing. “Well, chat- here he is, the most gloriously annoying Tubbo, here to join us for today’s stream. Yay us.”

“Hey!” Tubbo cuts in, giggling, “You’re the one that invited me!”

“And I’m quickly coming to *regret* that decision!”

“Yeah, yeah, sure you are.”

“I *am*, actually!”

“*Sure.*”

“Okay, that’s it,” Tommy decides, rolling his chair back closer to his screen and giving Tubbo a challenging grin – well, the camera, but Tubbo knows who it’s meant for. “Time to beat your ass at Bedwars – sign on, dickhead, so I can destroy you.”

Tubbo does so, logging on and grinning. “You can *try*,” he shoots back. He takes a brief moment, as he’s logging on, to take a look at chat – it looks like they’re absolutely *loving* this. Their dynamic is incredibly entertaining, it seems. Tubbo grins just a little wider.

He agrees. It’s so nice to be back.

-

“People are *so* curious about us.”

Tubbo laughs, leaning forward and resting his elbows on the table. Tommy leans back further in his chair, popping open a can of coke and taking a drink. It’s soothing against his hoarse throat, and he sighs a little in relief. “We did just meet,” Tubbo responds reasonably. “They don’t know that we’ve spent literally every second we can calling and texting since we’ve met, so, like, I can’t blame them for wondering.”

Tommy nods in agreement. “Yeah.”

His grin unconsciously softens a little, and he allows himself a little bit of vulnerability. He thinks he deserves it, after all of these years of denying- hoping- wishing. “Y’know, Tubbo,” he begins, a bit nervously. “I know it’s only been a few weeks, but, like- I’m really glad we met.”

Eyes widening, Tubbo opens his mouth as if to respond, and Tommy hurries to continue. “It’s- it’s been really nice, uh, getting to know you and hanging out with you.” Tommy bows his head, and mutters, embarrassed, “I’m just really glad this happened.”

It’s quiet for a moment. Tommy doesn’t look up, fiddling with his headphone cord and staring down at his lap. Then, there’s a choked little laugh, and Tubbo says, “Damn you, man,

you're gonna make me cry."

Tommy looks up and blinks at the startlingly emotional look painted all over Tubbo's face. He replies, voice soft, "I'm glad we met too, Tommy. This has been fun."

Grinning slightly, Tommy returns, "It really has been. Honestly, it's kinda wild how we clicked this quickly." Tommy hesitates, before tacking on, "It's almost like we've met before."

Tubbo's silent. His gaze turns strangely calculating, and Tommy's stomach twists nervously. All he says, though, is, "Yeah, it does kind of seem like that, huh."

Tommy's definitely reading too deeply into things, but- that slight moment, that slight pause, it's- it makes Tommy think, a little bit. It plants that little seed, that little what-if that he's tried so hard to keep buried this whole time.

But now, it's planted, and hard to stop it from continuing to grow.

-

"Tommy! Tommy, Tommy, Tommy, Tommy-"

Tommy sighs, threading more annoyance than he actually feels through his tone. "*What*, Tubbo?"

"C'mere!" Tubbo's tone doesn't change at all, still bright and excited. Tommy really shouldn't be surprised – Tubbo's always seemed to know how to tell when Tommy's actually annoyed. "C'mon, I wanna show you something."

Groaning exaggeratedly, Tommy asks, "Where even are you?"

"I'll send the coords!"

He waits exactly two seconds. "You're taking too long!"

"Be patient for *one second*, will you?"

"No, I won't, actually."

Tubbo sighs, a mirror of what Tommy had just done. Tommy just grins. "Alright, I'm coming," he concedes once the coords arrive, following them deeper into the world. He comes out onto this tiny little beach, and he sees Tubbo's character hopping over on the side of his screen.

"Over here!" Tubbo calls, waving his little hand.

Tommy laughs a little, and says, "Yeah, yeah, I'm here. What'd you want to show me?"

"This is it!" Tubbo exclaims, gesturing around.

Glancing around, Tommy raises an eyebrow, a hint of something uncomfortable winding in his stomach. "A...beach? You wanted to show me a beach?"

"Yeah!" Tubbo, his video on Tommy's second monitor, grins excitedly and continues, "I saw this area, and I was like, huh, this is a pretty little beach. It's nice and secluded, and it'd be a really nice place for us to build ourselves some little houses."

He adds on, "You could have a little beach house, Tommy!" And Tommy- Tommy-

It's such a little, *stupid* thing, but Tommy- Tommy *can't*-

"You can make your own little beach house, right over there, alright? Nice and secluded. So you're away from everything else."

"And what if I don't want a stupid little beach house?"

A deadly, threatening stare, before Tommy's lifted up by the collar and growled at. "You will do as I say, TommyInnit. Don't test me. You won't like the results."

Dream turns to stalk away, throwing a careless wave over his shoulder. "Build your beach house, Tommy, I'll be back. Maybe."

Ears ringing, Tommy barely catches himself let out a little gasp. His hands grip painfully at his chair armrests. He stares unseeingly at the screen, jaw clenched painfully. His chest hurts. Is he breathing? He's not sure he's breathing.

"-ommy! Tommy!"

Tommy manages to tune in a little bit to his surroundings, latching onto Tubbo's voice with all he has and sucking in a quick, painful breath. "Tommy, breathe in and out for me, okay? With me, like this." He just barely hears Tubbo taking exaggerated breaths, and he focuses on taking in a deeper breath, ignoring how much his chest hurts. He holds, letting it out slowly, and repeats a few times.

Eventually, he comes back to himself, and meets Tubbo's wide, concerned eyes. And Tommy- Tommy just had a fucking panic attack over a fucking *beach*. How fucking weak is he?

He forces a laugh, saying, "Sorry, Tubs. I don't know what got into me, there."

Tubbo just stares, for a moment. Tommy wishes he could hear the thoughts going through that head of his. "...It's fine," he eventually says. He moves his character away from the beach, heading into the woods. Tommy can't help but let out a quiet sigh of relief, and follows. "I think I saw this area over here that was even prettier- it also had *flowers!* Oooh, maybe it'll have some bees-"

Tommy laughs. "You and your bees," he teases, and Tubbo shoots him a teasingly stern look.

"Hey, bees are cute!"

“Yeah, yeah, whatever.” Slowly, the tension leeches out of Tommy’s shoulders. He’s fine. He’s fine.

He’s fine.

-

“Tubbo- Tubbo, I have *got* to show you something.”

Tubbo raises an eyebrow, watching Tommy as he scrambles for his phone, almost dropping it in his excitement. “This had better be good,” he says, and Tommy shoots him an offended look.

“Tubbo- Tubs. Big T. When have I *ever* sent you something that’s *not* good?”

Raising his hand in front of his face, Tubbo starts counting down on his fingers. “Well, there was the time you sent me that video of alpacas mating, which- I really did *not* need to see that. And there’s also all the stupid memes you send me, and the time you *literally* just sent me a picture of dog shit, and-”

“I maintain that all of those were *very* good posts to send you,” Tommy breaks in, and Tubbo sighs, rolling his eyes. It seems that in either reality, Tommy never changes. “Aha!” Tommy crows after a moment, “I found it!”

“Finally,” Tubbo can’t help but snark. Tommy just flips him the bird.

“*You*,” he says, “Can shut the fuck up and watch this super cool video I took last week.”

Tubbo snickers a bit and clicks open their DMs, pressing play on the video and leaning his head on his hands. It starts off dark, nothing but faint murmuring audible or visible from the video, but then-

The video *lights up*, colors flashing red and blue and everything in between. It seems to be the performance of a...light crew, Tubbo supposes? He guesses it’s meant to be really, really cool, really pretty, but-

As soon as the first light flashes, Tubbo feels himself go ramrod straight. He can’t seem to rip his eyes away from the screen, lights going red and blue and yellow and white and pink and *god they’re so bright and-*

‘Techno won’t hurt you.’

Tubbo trusted him – he trusts Techno, so why-

‘Be strong.’

Why is there a firework being aimed right at his face? Why is Techno apologizing? Why-

Oh god, oh no, it’s so bright and painful and it hurts and someone- Tommy- Wilbur- help-

The screen goes black.

Tubbo blinks back to himself, breathing heavy and back aching and far, far too tense. He forces himself to regain control of his breathing, taking in air through his nose and letting it out through his mouth. It takes far too long, but- eventually, he feels like he can function again.

He refocuses on the screen, and- ah. The video's gone. Tommy must have deleted it.

Oh, fuck. Tommy.

Tubbo glances hesitantly towards his second screen, where his best friend still remains. Tommy's leaning forward in his chair, mouth open and eyes wide in clear concern. Guilt and fear both rise within Tubbo, and he clenches his fists, laughing nervously.

Tommy asks before Tubbo can say anything, "Hey, Tubs, you- you okay, man?"

"Yeah!" Tubbo chirps, probably far too quickly. "Yeah, I'm fine, don't worry about me."

The look Tommy gives him is open and worried. It almost makes Tubbo want to cry. "You sure? I'm- I'm sorry I sent that video. Won't happen again."

Tubbo's heart warms, and he slumps a little further into his seat, his shoulders loosening up and back finally relaxing. "Yeah, I'm good, Toms," he responds softly. "I'm fine. Don't worry about me."

Tommy shoots him a doubtful look, his eyes darting around Tubbo's face. "If you're sure," he says after a moment, then perks up slightly in a way that's obviously for show. "Oh! Here's another video I think you'd like."

He sends a video that's just cats doing increasingly ridiculous things. No flashing lights, no colors. Tubbo relaxes even more.

Soon, he's laughing hard enough he can't breathe, and everything's okay.

Everything's okay.

-

It's one of their quiet calls, late-night and calming, when Tubbo starts playing the piano.

Tommy barely registers it at first. He's slumped over his desk, eyes half-lidded and mindlessly tracing patterns with his fingers into the paper that he should be doing math on. Both of them should be doing homework, probably, but they gave up on it ages ago. They had been chatting, but had devolved into just...existing together, the past few minutes.

The music grows louder, though, and soon, Tommy's sitting up, rubbing at his eyes and peering at the screen. His heart warms, and something clogs in his throat at the sight of Tubbo in front of him. He's just absently plunking out notes and chords, but- Tommy hasn't heard him play in *so long*.

He missed it.

He doesn't say anything, because there's an even fifty-percent chance that Tubbo'll stop playing as soon as he realizes Tommy's listening. Instead, he sinks back into his chair, closing his eyes and just letting the music drift over him.

Tubbo goes through a fair few songs, them growing more and more complicated as time goes on. Tommy lets a small smile make its way onto his face, and he can honestly see himself drifting off right here, just like this. He remembers a time when Tubbo and him used to sleep in the same room, and Tommy would bug Tubbo into playing the piano for him, and Tubbo would sigh and complain, but do it anyway. Tommy'd lay his head across Tubbo's lap. Tubbo would keep playing until Tommy fell asleep.

It's not the same, but Tommy can almost imagine it is.

Tommy's just about drifting off, the music lulling him to sleep like nothing else does (except for Wilbur's music, all that time ago), when Tubbo switches songs once again.

And, suddenly, the chords are hauntingly familiar.

"I heard there was a special place...where men could go and emancipate...the brutality...and tyranny...of their rulers..."

Tommy jerks his head up, eyes narrowing in on Tubbo. His head's down, bowed over the piano. Tommy can't hope to read his face.

If he squints, it looks like Tubbo's shoulders might be trembling.

The song sounds beautiful, of course. It's Tubbo playing it, of course it's beautiful, but...it also feels like it's got a *ridiculous* amount of emotion weaved throughout it. That's probably just Tommy projecting, though – it's not like Tubbo even means to be playing the anthem that Tommy sang, that Tommy fought for.

Hallelujah is a beautiful song, too. Tommy just can't help but hear *My L'Manberg* whenever he hears the opening chords.

Tommy lets Tubbo finish out the song, breathing as quietly as he can the whole time and doing his best not to start crying. He's- not quite sure he succeeds, but he swipes his arm across his eyes briefly and hopes that's enough.

He coughs, just a little bit, and Tubbo must've forgotten that he was there because he startles slightly. His head jerks up, and his eyes are a little red. Tubbo must be tired, if he looks that way. "Oh, uh-" Tubbo starts, then pauses.

They're both silent, for a long moment. Tommy cracks a wry grin, and says, "Pretty song, innit?" Tubbo nods slowly, something complicated flashing across his face.

"Yeah," he whispers. "Yeah. It's pretty." Another pause. Then, Tubbo stands up, turning away from the camera briefly and bringing an arm up. Tommy takes the opportunity to swipe at his

own eyes yet again. “Tommy, I think I’m gonna go ahead and go to sleep, now,” Tubbo says, and Tommy nods, giving him a small, yet genuine smile.

“Alright, Big T. Night.”

“Night.”

It’s not easy for Tommy to fall asleep, after.

His night’s not dreamless, either, but all he dreams about is campfires, and singing, and precious, fragile hope.

-

“You know what, Tommy?”

“What, Dream?!”

“You’re done! You’re so totally finished! I’m going to kill Tubbo, just like I should’ve done during the last fight. I’m going to kill Ranboo, too! And then, I’m going to kill you, so that you can watch it all happen and know that it’s all your fault.”

A chill goes down Tommy’s spine, and his hands instantly begin trembling. He curls them into fists, and suddenly, he feels so, so scared. “No,” he begs, over and over again, “No, no, not them, not them.”

Not them. Never them.

Tommy doesn’t know what he expected from Dream, doesn’t know how much he actually expected this to work, but- when Dream agrees to his proposition, all he can feel is bone deep, unending relief.

He’s stabbed, and he dies, and he knows that Dream’s gone, and the two most important people in the world are safe.

(For now, his brain whispers.)

And he wakes up.

When Tommy jerks upright in bed, he’s already sobbing.

He stifles a gasp, pressing his hands into his eyes and making a desperate attempt to slow the tears. But- it’s- it’s not enough. It’s nowhere near enough. He can’t seem to get enough air in and he’s still crying and he can’t get rid of the torturous, never-ending *fear* that woke him up in the first place and-

Letting out a whimper, Tommy curls up into himself.

The thing is- ever since Tommy started getting a more complete picture of just what the hell these dreams represented; more like, ever since he first had this same *horrible* nightmare and

figured out exactly the context for it, his greatest fear has been, well-

That his plan failed.

He died, so he has absolutely *no* way of knowing if Dream even honored his promise. He died, so he has no idea whether Tubbo got to live another day, whether Ranboo got to see another sunrise. He has no fucking clue whether his two best friends got to hug their son again, or if they got to chase each other around the house again, or play games until five in the morning again. He just-

He doesn't *know*.

What he does know is that Dream is a *sick* person, a fucking dickhead who does what he pleases and ignores what everyone else is feeling. He could've killed Tommy, and moved on to kill the other two with nothing stopping him. And *fuck* if that thought doesn't haunt him constantly.

Another sob rips its way out of him, and- Tommy can't do this. He can't do this, he can't not know if Tubbo survived, if Ranboo survived. If his best friends were murdered right after they watched him die; were murdered after they *cried* for him. He- he has to know. He has to.

He fucking *can't*.

But- he can do the next best thing.

Tommy scrambles out of bed, looking around wildly until he finds his phone, laying innocuously on the other side of his bed. He must've knocked it over there after his freak-out. He snatches it off the bed and opens it as quickly as he can, typing in his password and trying not to let his tears smear over the screen too much.

Before he can think too hard about it, he clicks on Tubbo's contact, and presses call.

Sobbing, he lays back down, presses his phone to his ear, and hopes hopes *hopes* that his best friend will answer.

If he doesn't, Tommy doesn't know what he'll do.

-

Of the things Tubbo expected to happen at three-o'clock this morning, being woken up by his phone ringing is not one of them. Maybe it should've been, but until recently, he didn't really have a friend he called at all.

Groaning, Tubbo rolls over and feels around for his phone, glaring blearily at the screen until his eyes manage to focus. The contact finally swims into clarity, and Tubbo wakes up a little more when he sees the name on the screen.

It's Tommy. Why would Tommy be calling? They were literally on call just a few hours ago, and he seemed fine when they hung up. So why-

Well, it doesn't matter why, Tubbo decides, blinking a bit and forcing himself to wake up more. Tommy obviously needs him, and so he picks up, pressing the phone to his ear.

"Hey, Tommy, what's-"

Instantly, he hears a faint sob echo through the phone, and his eyes widen. He immediately feels ten times more awake, and his alarm only rises when all he can understand through the sobs is a choked-off, "*Tubbo?*"

"Hey- hey, man," Tubbo frantically attempts to soothe, fear rapidly replacing the alarm. What the *hell* happened to make Tommy like this? "What's wrong?"

Tommy just *whimpers*, and despite knowing he doesn't even know Tommy's address and also that it's highly unlikely he'd be able to get to his house even remotely quickly, he's already rising from bed. "Toms, please, talk to me," Tubbo begs.

There's silence for a long moment, the only sounds coming through being faint, labored breathing. Tubbo forces himself to sit down, one hand gripping the mattress so hard it hurts and the other pressing the phone as hard as he can to his ear. His teeth dig into his bottom lip. He thinks he might be bleeding. "...Tommy?" Tubbo tries again.

More silence. Then, finally, *finally*, "...You're alive?" Tommy sounds so *small*, so completely and utterly terrified. Tubbo's eyes narrow slightly in confusion, even though something twists in his chest. An inkling of *something* is knocking at the back of his brain, but he pushes that aside for now.

"...Yeah?" Tubbo takes in a breath, then asks slowly, "Tommy, why would you think I wasn't alive? We were just on call a few hours ago."

Tommy takes in a sharp breath, and straight up *blubbers*, "He- he was there- I died but he could- could've kill- killed you still and-" Tommy lets out another sob, "Thank *ender* you're alive."

And Tubbo-

Tubbo freezes, mind straight-up going blank for a second. Tommy- Tommy just-

Tears of his own welling up, Tubbo brings his free hand up to his mouth. Oh.

Oh.

This- this explains so much. This explains- the beach, and Tommy's awareness of the flashing lights, and his reaction to Tubbo playing the anthem, and-

Oh, ender, it makes so much *sense*.

Tubbo muffles a sob of his own with his palm, and he whispers urgently, "Tommy. *Tommy.*" Tommy- TommyInnit, Tubbo's *best friend*, his confidante, his brother in all but blood- Tommy quiets, and Tubbo can almost hear his distressed confusion. "Tommy," Tubbo barely *breathes*. "Tommy, do you..." Tubbo swallows. "Do you remember the bench?"

The call is silent for a long, long while. Tears are still freely making their way down Tubbo's cheeks.

Tommy lets out a choked breath, and lets out a quiet, "*Oh.*" And, because Tommy undoubtedly knows that Tubbo needs- he *needs* to hear a confirmation, Tommy whispers, "Yeah, Tubs. Yeah, I do."

It's quiet.

And the floodgates open.

"Ender," Tubbo gasps out, hand doing absolutely nothing to muffle the sobbing mess he's turned into. All he can hear is renewed crying from Tommy's end, too, and Tubbo just keeps repeating, "Ender, ender, *ender, ender, ender-*"

"*You're alive,*" Tommy chokes out again, and this time, it has *so much more meaning*, and just sends Tubbo into another wave of tears. They're alive. They're alive, and *here*, and together, again.

Tubbo replies, grinning tearily even though Tommy can't see him, "Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, we survived." Tommy *wails*, and Tubbo absently wonders just how they haven't woken anyone with their cries. Tubbo's walls have all crumbled around him, all his supports, his little boxes of emotion that saved him from insanity from all these years – they're gone.

But it's okay, because Tommy's here to catch him. He's finally here, again. That's what matters.

"I'm so glad," Tommy whispers, and it just about sends Tubbo into another wave of tears. "I'm *so glad you survived.*" And- Tubbo can't keep it in anymore.

Though he's sure the effect is ruined slightly by the still-wet-sounding tone to his voice, Tubbo whispers, "You *dumbass.*" Tubbo wipes at his eyes, ignoring the little noise of confusion Tommy makes. He continues, "Why would you *do* that? You-"

"I *had* to do that," Tommy cuts in just as passionately, understanding Tubbo immediately, because even after all this time Tommy *still* knows Tubbo better than he knows himself. And ender, Tubbo can *see* the uncompromisingly stubbornness that has always been an integral part of his best friend. As frustrating as it is right now, Tubbo can't help but feel a sudden wave of affection, too. "You two- you were gonna *die*- how was I-"

"We could've *found a way,*" Tubbo breaks in, a sob interrupting midway. "We could've- Tommy, *you died in our arms.*" Voice trailing off into a broken whisper, Tubbo wraps an arm around himself in a useless attempt to comfort himself.

Tommy's quiet. "I wasn't about to risk it not working out," he says softly. "You guys are-" he cuts himself off, and Tubbo knows it's because he's picking his words carefully. "You guys are worth everything," he finally decides on. "I'd gladly do it a thousand times over if it meant you both could live another day."

Tubbo, overcome, can do nothing more than press his fingers between his eyes, fighting desperately to not cry even *more*. Ender, how could people even have thought Tommy was ever heartless? Was selfish? Because *this*- this is the *furthest* thing from fucking selfishness. “Ender, Tommy,” he whispers. He swallows, taking his time to choose his next words. “You’re not allowed to do that again,” he says, and speaks over Tommy’s scoff. “But...”

“Thank you,” he finishes more quietly. “Thank you for saving him- and me, too.”

(Even if it didn’t mean much for Tubbo in the end. Tommy- Tommy doesn’t need to know that.)

There’s another silence, but this time, it feels comfortable. Feels loving. “You were worth it,” Tommy repeats, and Tubbo closes his eyes, chest feeling painfully tight, and for a moment, all he can feel is so immensely fond.

“I love you,” Tubbo whispers, bringing a hand up and clutching at his shirt. Ender, he wishes Tommy were here to hug right about now. Tommy lets out a choked laugh, and Tubbo knows he feels the exact same way.

He responds, low and affectionate and so entirely *him*, “I love you too.”

There’s a low thunk from the other end – Tommy’s head against the headboard, maybe? “Fuck,” Tommy breathes, letting out another light laugh, “I really wish I could hug you right now.”

Tubbo sighs, curling closer around himself. “Yeah, me too,” he whispers.

A shuffling noise comes through the other side, and then Tommy says urgently, “Wait- wait, Tubbo, you said you live near Brighton, right?”

Furrowing his brows, Tubbo responds, “...Yeah?”

“Tomorrow,” Tommy responds immediately, sounding determined. Tubbo raises his eyebrows.

“Tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow,” Tommy continues, “I’m coming down. Fuck school, fuck everything – I’m getting on that first fucking train down to Brighton, figuring out how the hell to get to your house from there, and we’re going to fucking hug. Okay?”

Tubbo stares up at the ceiling, eyes wide. Of course, Tommy’d come up with a plan like this. That’s so *him*. He lets out a disbelieving laugh. “Okay, Tommy,” he responds, suddenly grinning so widely it hurts. “Okay, Tommy, I’ll be there.”

Tommy laughs. A little bubble of elation seems to blow up and *burst* in Tubbo’s chest, and he laughs also. “Okay,” he repeats. “Okay.”

They fall asleep like that, right on call.

It's the best sleep Tubbo's ever had.

-

Tommy can't fucking stay still.

"Pulling into Brighton Station," the familiar, automated voice drones, and Tommy sits up ramrod straight, feet still tapping at the ground and hands twisting up in each other. He's so fucking excited, and nervous, and overwhelmed with emotion that he can't fucking *handle it*.

His parents had- not been thrilled, to say the least, when he'd bolted out of the house at five in the morning, intent on catching the very first train out of Nottingham Station. He's actually not sure what they said, but by the way his phone's been blowing up since he left the house, it's probably not good.

He could not give any *less* fucks about what they think right now.

He's about to see *Tubbo*. Tubbo, his best friend. Tubbo, who he fought in multiple wars with, who he fought with and killed for and died for. Tubbo, who always gave the *best* hugs and had the best hair to braid with and who always, *always* was the best person to go to when he needed a shoulder to cry on. He's here.

Tubbo's *here*.

There's still one missing of their little trio, but- Tubbo's here, and Tommy's here, and Tommy's so overwhelmed with happiness that he thinks he could cry again.

Ender, when Tubbo asked that question – asked about their *bench* – Tommy straight-up stopped breathing for a moment. Their bench has been- their bench is one of Tommy's fondest memories, still, fifteen-some years after they last sat on it. It's *theirs*, it always was theirs, and it means so goddamn much to Tommy.

Tubbo remembered it. And that made Tommy want to start to (and end up) fucking sobbing again.

He can't stop grinning while thinking about it, still.

Finally, *finally*, the doors open. Tommy grabs his hoodie – the only thing he'd really remembered to grab right after he woke up – and *sprints* out onto the platform. He looks around wildly. Tubbo doesn't live that close to here, he knows, but he still can't help but hope-

Oh.

There he is.

Tommy's eyes latch onto the wild brown hair first, and then shift downwards to the familiar, *familiar* brown eyes. Tubbo looks- different. Of course he does, but it's *him*, it's *Tubbo*, and before he even realizes it Tommy's sprinting over.

He comes to a stop right in front of Tubbo. They just...stare, for a moment, taking in all that's different and all that's the same and taking in the fact that they're here at all. They're here, and they're real.

"You're still short," are the first words that come out of Tommy's mouth. Tubbo lets out a laugh that comes out of more of a sob, and punches him lightly in the arm.

"You're still a *dick*," Tubbo retorts, and Tommy blinks rapidly and snickers a little.

And then he's reaching for Tubbo and Tubbo's arms are around him and-

Tommy's finally, *finally* home.

Chapter End Notes

they :')

thank you so much for reading, and i hope you enjoyed! don't worry, there will be much meetup content in the next chapter, this isn't all you're getting :D

see you wednesday! <3

together again

Chapter Summary

Tommy's warm.

Tubbo burrows deeper into Tommy's hold, wrapping his arms as tightly as he can around him. Tommy clutches at him just as tightly. Resting his head against Tommy's heart, Tubbo lets out a little sigh. A chuckle rumbles through Tommy's chest in response; he lays his head down on the crown of Tubbo's, and Tubbo's heart is full enough to *burst*.

If a few tears are trailing down Tubbo's cheeks and soaking into Tommy's shirt, no one needs to know.

Chapter Notes

clingy clingy clingy :D

also, psst, if there are any one piece fans out there keep an eye out, i slipped a reference in there ;)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy's warm.

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They just...stand there, for a while. Tubbo has no doubt they're probably getting stared at by the passersby. He doesn't give a singular shit. Tommy lets out a sigh of contentment, and his arms loosen slightly. Tubbo takes the cue and leans back slightly, peering upwards and looking Tommy in the eyes.

Tommy whispers, "...Hi," a small, but so entirely sincere smile tugging at his lips. Tubbo matches it, heart clenching. Ender, he has no clue what to do with all this overwhelming *joy*

flooding through him.

“Hi,” Tubbo responds. Just his response makes Tommy’s smile split wider into a grin, and he tugs Tubbo closer. Tubbo goes willingly.

Disbelievingly, Tommy says, “You’re *here*.”

“Well,” Tubbo responds cheekily but grinning wider, too, “Technically, I’m the one who should be saying that – you’re not exactly from around here.”

Tommy retorts, “Shut up,” but the way he throws his head back in a delighted laugh betrays his true emotion. Fuck, Tubbo had *missed* him. He grips at Tommy’s shirt, pressing his face into his chest to hide his ear-splitting grin.

Finally, after another moment of just- hugging, Tubbo pulls back. He reaches for Tommy’s hand and threads his fingers through Tommy’s, and tugs lightly. “C’mon,” he says, returning Tommy’s squeeze with one of his own. “Let’s go to my place – it’s cold out here.”

Laughing, Tommy agrees, “Alright.” He throws an arm over Tubbo’s shoulder, and they make their way to the parking lot. “Hey,” Tommy says after a bit, and when Tubbo glances up his brows are furrowed.

“Yeah?” Tubbo responds.

“How did you even get here? Didn’t you say that this is like forty-five minutes from your house?”

Tubbo shrugs. “I ran.”

“You *ran*?!”

-

Tubbo did not, in fact, run to the train station, much to Tommy’s relief and also slight chagrin that Tubbo managed to fool him. Instead, Tubbo drags him to the bus station, still laughing at Tommy’s shocked response.

Tommy should’ve expected him to mess with him – he guesses he’s still getting used to being around Tubbo’s...interesting sense of humor again.

They go back to Tubbo’s house – apparently his parents and sister are gone for a few days because of some sort of school event, so they have the house to themselves. Tommy immediately makes himself at home, rummaging through their fridge and stealing their food. Listen, it’s practically a best friend’s responsibility to steal their food – he’s just doing his sworn duty as Tubbo’s best friend.

All Tubbo does is roll his eyes and indulge him in the end, so Tommy’s the real winner, here.

“So,” Tommy says through a mouthful of crackers, “What now?”

Tubbo shrugs slightly. “I dunno.” Then, eyeing Tommy’s mouth distastefully, “Ranboo’s not here to say it, so I’m gonna say it instead: gross.”

A pang shoots through Tommy’s heart. Both of them go quiet; Tommy sees Tubbo look down and start fiddling with his hands, messing with the hem of his shirt. Tommy swallows and clenches his hands into fists.

The air between them is heavy.

“Do you-” Tommy swallows, a large-as-life knot making itself known in his throat. “D’you think Ranboo’s here, too?”

Tubbo scrunches his eyes shut, and Tommy’s moving to stand by him, holding one of his hands before his mind catches up with his actions. Taking a slow, controlled breath in, Tubbo grasps back at his hand. “I dunno,” he finally says, opening his eyes and glancing up at Tommy. He doesn’t continue.

Tommy’s heart hurts.

“He could be,” he offers. It doesn’t feel like much. Tubbo shakes his head, blinking rapidly.

He says quietly, “So could any of the others.” Tommy bites his lip. He’s been trying not to think about that.

If Technoblade was back, or Wilbur, or *Dream*, Tommy doesn’t know what he’d do. He doesn’t know what he *could* do. “Yeah,” he responds quietly. “Still- I dunno if you’ve watched Phil- Philza’s streams, but he doesn’t seem to be the same?”

Tubbo nods, murmuring, “Yeah. He’s- similar, but he’s not the same. He doesn’t seem like it, at least.”

“Yeah.”

They both go quiet. Tommy silently reaches around Tubbo and brings him into another hug – Tubbo comes unresistingly. He’s a little surprised Tubbo’s allowing him to be hugged this much. Must be another, subtle difference. Tommy can’t help but be glad for it.

He runs his hands up and down Tubbo’s spine, tugging gently at the hair at the nape of his neck. “Hey,” he mutters, laying his head atop Tubbo’s. “Don’t lose hope, okay? He could still be here.”

Tubbo doesn’t respond, for a moment. Tommy can feel him taking in a shaky breath against him. “Yeah,” Tubbo responds. He forces his voice to be bright, be optimistic, but Tommy knows he’s not convinced. Tommy’s never really been the optimistic one out of the two of them, but, for this – he thinks he can afford to keep Tubbo’s hopes up regarding this.

Tommy’s fingers brush up against Tubbo’s hair again, and an idea hits him. “Hey, Tubs,” Tommy says more lightly, and Tubbo looks up at him.

“Yeah?”

“Let me braid your hair.”

An almost awe-filled smile immediately tugs at Tubbo’s lips. Tommy knows the feeling – the fact that he can even *ask* that is almost overwhelming. “Alright,” Tubbo agrees, and Tommy beams.

-

Tubbo loves when Lani braids his hair. Don’t get him wrong, it’s so, *so* nice feeling his little sister gently weave the strands together, having yet another thing to bond them together. But-

As Tommy settles behind him and starts brushing through his hair, it brings Tubbo *home*.

Tommy says lightly, “It’s weird not having your hair as long.” Tubbo snorts.

“My family said the opposite. I only started growing it out recently, so they were giving me strange looks for a *while*.”

Tommy laughs. “I can imagine.” They fall into peaceful silence for a moment, then Tommy asks absently, “What made you want to grow it out?”

Unconsciously, Tubbo’s spine stiffens. His hands clench. Tommy notices- of course he does- and his hands stall.

“Ah,” he breathes quietly. Tubbo braces himself, but the question- comment- judgement- *whatever* Tubbo was expecting, he doesn’t even know- never comes. Instead, the hands continue their gentle motions, and Tommy just declares, “Y’know- Tubbo, it’s *really* weird not having to work around your horns anymore. Nice – because they were annoying as *fuck* to work with – but weird.”

Something warms in Tubbo’s chest. Of course Tommy wouldn’t make him explain. He already knows- or, he can guess, at least. Of course he’d change the subject, so Tubbo doesn’t have to think about it. Of course.

He finds himself fighting back tears, much to his chagrin. Damn, since when did he cry *this* easily?

“Much easier for me, too, believe me,” Tubbo responds dryly, swiping at his eyes briefly. “I don’t get headaches nearly as often. Those fucking things were *heavy*.”

Plus, he doesn’t say, it’s nice having that reminder of *him* gone.

Tommy snorts, “*Pfft*- yeah, I bet.”

“Oh, shut up, *human*,” Tubbo retorts. “You never had to deal with things fucking sticking out of your head, so be quiet and braid my hair.”

Tubbo can’t see him, but he knows Tommy’s rolling his eyes. “Yes, sir,” he replies sarcastically. His next tug is a little harder than necessary. Tubbo slaps at Tommy’s shin in retaliation.

“Stop that!” He demands, and Tommy just laughs.

“Yeah, yeah, I will.”

The next while is...peaceful. Tommy braids Tubbo's hair, taking more time than he normally would've. Tubbo can't blame him – he wants to savor this feeling, bottle it up and keep it so that he can feel it forever. This is- this is more than Tubbo could've ever hoped for, when he first woke up from one of those hellish nightmares. It feels like a lifetime ago that he's felt this calm; this completely, utterly content.

Part of him wants to reach out to his side – reach out towards a hand that should be there. He holds himself back. Ranboo's not there. He might never be there. It- it doesn't feel complete without him, but Tubbo allows himself to revel in this feeling anyway.

He has his best friend back, and so he allows himself to sink back into the couch and fall asleep, right then and there.

-

Tommy's playing gently with the ends of Tubbo's braids when he wakes up. He's not looking at Tubbo, though, scrolling mindlessly on his phone and letting the time pass by, so he doesn't notice at first.

He'd shifted down to the floor when Tubbo had fallen asleep, letting Tubbo topple over into his lap and adjusting him until his head was pillowed against Tommy's thigh. It's familiar, if not something Tommy wasn't quite used to at that moment, and he easily gets used to the feeling again. When this happens, Tubbo's usually out for a couple of hours, and the circles beneath Tubbo's eyes have been awfully dark the whole time Tommy's known him. Tommy had been sure to make himself comfortable.

The only hint he gets that Tubbo is awake is a faint groan he lets out; Tommy glances down, putting his phone down when he sees Tubbo blinking awake, eyes glazed and confused. “Welcome back to the land of the living,” Tommy grins, shifting slightly. Tubbo blinks again.

He sits up, rubbing at his eyes and muttering, “Since when were we lying on the floor?”

“Since you fell asleep,” Tommy shrugs, bending his knees and wincing as the blood starts flowing again. “Couldn't have you waking up and disturbing my me-time, after all.”

Tubbo shoots him a look, clearly aiming to look exasperated but just appearing affectionate. “You're so full of shit,” he responds fondly, standing up and offering a hand. Tommy just grins and takes it, letting Tubbo pull him up.

He stumbles slightly, taking a moment to find his footing. “Damn, I forgot how strong you were,” he mutters under his breath. Tubbo hears anyway and laughs.

“Yeah, I made sure to keep my strength up.”

Tommy gives him a strange look. “For what?” *We're safe here*, Tommy doesn't add.

Tubbo doesn't answer for a moment, a complicated look flashing over his face. "Because," he answers vaguely, and Tommy lets out a discontented hum. Before he can call Tubbo out on his shit, though, Tubbo perks up and grabs Tommy's hand. "C'mon! We should sing together!"

Something soft settles in Tommy's chest. Singing together- the last time they've done that was back in Snowchester. It's been a while. "Let's do it!" Tommy agrees, letting Tubbo drag him along.

The piano ends up just being in the next room, and Tubbo takes a seat on the bench. Tommy joins him. And- when they start, it's like they never stopped. They easily fall back into their routine, Tubbo playing a song, and Tommy singing along, Tubbo sometimes joining in. Tommy steals the piano sometimes, forcing Tubbo to let him play. Tubbo laughs and indulges him. It's nice. It's really, really nice.

At some point, Tubbo pauses. His hands rest poised above certain chords, clearly ready to play. Tommy blinks at him. "What're you waiting for?" he inquires. Tubbo bites his lip, taking his time before he meets Tommy's eyes.

"I-" Tubbo cuts himself off, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath in before he reopens them again. Instead of continuing on with his sentence, he starts hesitantly plunking out chords.

Instantly, Tommy knows what song it is. Tears burn at the backs of his eyes. He ignores them, though. Breathing in deep, he closes his eyes, forcing the tears back, and starts singing.

"I heard there was...a special place..."

Tubbo joins in, *"Where men could go...and emancipate..."*

They sing together, the whole song through. It- it aches, hearing it again. It doesn't feel complete, really- they're missing their fellow soldiers, they're missing the people who fought and killed and died alongside them. They're the only ones here now, though, and so they sing.

By the end, they're both crying. But, in a way, Tommy feels lighter.

He wordlessly wraps an arm around Tubbo's shoulders, who leans over and rests his head on Tommy's shoulder. They stay silent. It's not uncomfortable.

After a while, Tubbo whispers, "...I miss it."

Tommy swallows. "Yeah," he murmurs back. "I miss it too." He leans his head onto Tubbo's, who doesn't say a word when a few more of Tommy's tears soak into his hair. "I miss all of them," Tommy admits quietly. He feels more than sees Tubbo nod, his hair brushing up against Tommy's neck.

"Me too," he breathes.

Something heavy sits in Tommy's chest. He breathes through it, holds it, and then lets it go, because, well. Tommy knows there's no getting back what they've lost.

"I'm glad you're here," he says again, and Tubbo snuffles.

He grabs at Tommy's hand, lacing their fingers together. "I'm glad you're here too."

What really matters is what they've got now.

-

In the end, Tommy has to go home that very same day.

His parents are more than a little worried and also *fuming*, and they've both got school the next day. They can't afford Tommy staying any longer. They have to part, and they *know* that, but-

It doesn't make it any easier.

"I'll come back," Tommy promises, holding onto Tubbo with all he's got. Tubbo laughs wetly, slapping at Tommy's chest lightly before squeezing around his chest again.

"You'd *better*, or I'm coming to get you."

Tommy snickers, ignoring the wetness in his eyes. "Sounds rather threatening, Big T."

"That's 'cause it is!"

That draws an actual laugh out of Tommy. "Alright, alright." He clutches Tubbo just a little tighter, before letting go and looking his best friend in the eyes. "I'll call you when I get back."

Tubbo smiles, swiping briefly at his eyes as he backs away from Tommy. "You'd better," he threatens again. His voice drops into something lower, a little more sincere. "Get home safe."

"I will," Tommy says seriously, grabbing his bag and stepping onto the train once the doors open. He hesitates, before calling out, "I love you!" over his shoulder.

(He and Tubbo- they'd never really been overly-verbally affectionate, before. Tommy never really thought that'd change. But, now, having lost each other and found each other again, knowing Tubbo saw him die and suffered for *decades* with that knowledge, well-

He thinks a little extra affection isn't all that bad.)

Tubbo calls back, "Love you too, dumbass!"

The doors close, separating them again, but this time, Tommy knows they'll be alright.

They're back, and he knows they'll see each other again.

(After he's back, Eryn and Freddie accost him and force him to hang out with them. Apparently, he's been "too distant" these past few weeks. Tommy just acquiesces and laughs.

Guess he's made some pretty damn good friends, both in his past life and this one.)

-

The next few weeks are some of the happiest of Tubbo's life.

School's- school. He hates it, he never really liked it in the first place – too restrictive, not enough nuclear weapons for his taste. But, during school, now he has Tommy just a text away. Tommy almost always responds immediately. It's a welcome change from *before*, when Tommy could sometimes take hours to respond to a message from his communicator.

After school, whenever they can, they call. It's pretty much the same as they did before they realized, but now it seems like there's nothing holding them back anymore. They talk about *everything*. It's- it's really nice.

Tubbo takes a few days off from streaming. They were both exhausted from the realization, and Tommy was extra tired (and extra grounded, for a bit) because of visiting Tubbo. Tubbo remembers laughing when Tommy'd whined when he told Tubbo his parents barred him from leaving the house for anything other than school.

"Tommy, you never leave the house anyway," he had said dryly, and Tommy'd pouted.

"Yeah, but now I'm *forced* not to! And they're also not letting me stream."

"You weren't going to do that anyway."

"Shut *up*, Tubbo!"

A cheeky grin. "Nah, I don't think I will."

"Just you wait, next time we hang out I'm going to beat the shit out of you."

"You can try."

Tubbo grins, thinking back to that conversation.

Things are good.

Tubbo streams a couple times before Tommy can, but as soon as Tommy's able to stream again, he makes Tubbo join him. Tubbo, of course, says yes.

They spend the whole time just absolutely ribbing each other, their dynamic seamless. He doesn't know if people notice a difference between them – they're not acting all that different, he doesn't think, but who knows, honestly.

All Tubbo knows is that he has his best friend back, and it's the best feeling ever.

-

The next couple of months pass the same way. They both live their lives, streaming together constantly. They both grow a lot as streamers, gaining more and more followers and viewers. A lot of their viewer base is the same, but more people flock to Tommy. Tubbo can't blame them. Tommy's just got this charm to him – he's an entertainer, through and through, and he's finally being allowed to show it.

Tubbo remembers, before all of the wars happened, before the election happened and Tubbo and Tommy weren't *allowed* to be kids anymore- Tommy *loved* to act. He used to parade around, making up stupid skits on the fly and doing his level best to make everyone around him laugh. Wilbur used to join in, sometimes, and they were surprisingly *good* together. In another world, Tubbo could see them acting together.

Tommy's finally being allowed to show off and be *him* in front of these thousands of people, and Tubbo couldn't be more proud of him.

They live, they have fun, and life- life's *good*.

-

One day, Tommy doesn't answer his phone.

Tubbo tries not to worry. Yes, they text constantly, and yes, Tommy's never taken more than a couple of hours to respond to Tubbo, but he's sure Tommy's fine. He's probably just busy. Tommy cares a lot about school, which was surprising at first to Tubbo but isn't really that surprising in hindsight, so he's probably working on a project or something.

In the meantime, Tubbo does his best to distract himself. He does homework (ugh), he streams, he hangs out with Lani. He tries not to think about the way his phone is suspiciously silent, the last text from Tommy having been sent the night before – a *night, dumbass* when they'd been about to go to sleep.

Tommy doesn't respond all of that day.

Tubbo tries and fails to shove away his worry.

-

Tubbo starts spamming Tommy the next day.

He- he knows he's being unreasonable, here – it's not like Tommy doesn't have a life outside of Tubbo. He can't be expected to be at Tubbo's beck and call. Tubbo spams him anyway.

Last time- last time Tommy disappeared, Tubbo didn't reach out. Last time, the next thing Tubbo heard about him was him being trapped in a prison. Last time, Tommy *died*, and Tubbo did nothing to stop it. He could've helped Tommy, could've at least *tried* to save him, but he didn't.

Tubbo's not letting that happen again.

And so he calls Tommy, over and over again, and the sick feeling in his gut only grows as Tommy continues to not answer.

Tommy's *offline* status in discord haunts him.

-

"Tommy, I swear, if you don't pick up the phone I'm going to kick your ass."

Tubbo paces around the room impatiently, phone held to his ear. It's now been five days since Tommy's responded to one of Tubbo's texts, and- Tubbo's always tried to not be the worrying type – that was always Ranboo's job – but he can't help it, now. When Tommy goes from texting every second that he can to going radio silent, well. Tubbo thinks he has the right to be worried.

He calls again when Tommy doesn't pick up, biting his lip. If- if Tommy doesn't respond to *something* today, Tubbo decides, he's going to find Tommy himself. They'd shared their addresses with each other after their realization, so Tubbo *does* know exactly how to find him. He's getting more and more willing to take that step every second, regardless of how his family would question everything about what he's doing.

The phone rings, three, four, five times, then goes silent. Tubbo tries again. No answer. Tubbo collapses back onto his bed, and buries his face in his hands.

Suddenly, Tubbo has to fight back the urge to cry.

He's fine, Tubbo tells himself. Tommy's always been strong, and in this life, he has a family that – from what Tubbo can tell – loves him a lot. He's fine. He has to be.

He has to be.

-

Tubbo packs a bag. There's not much to pack, really, but he still makes sure to bring the necessities. He doesn't want to be stranded without a phone charger – that'd be something an idiot (Tommy) would do. "Okay," Tubbo whispers to himself. "Okay." He has all of his stuff, he's ready to go.

As soon as he's picking up his bag, his phone, laid off to the side, lights up. Tubbo lunges for it, and- it's Tommy.

Tubbo almost sobs in relief.

"You absolute *prick*," he says as he picks up. He sits heavily down onto his bed, legs suddenly gone boneless.

Tommy just laughs softly. "Hey, Tubs," he says warmly. "Miss me?" Some worry threads through his voice, then. "You been alright? I saw all your missed calls."

“Am *I* alright?” Tubbo takes a sharp turn from relieved to angry, all the worry he’s been feeling for the past week overwhelming him in that instant. “Tommy- where the fuck *were* you? You haven’t been online in ages!”

There’s a pause. “I’ve been on my trip?” Tommy replies, confused. “Tubbo, I thought I told you about this- remember, I was going camping for a week with Freddie and Eryn and wouldn’t have service, so I wouldn’t be able to talk for a little while.”

Tubbo swallows, breath in shaky. “Tommy,” he whispers. “Tommy, you didn’t- you didn’t tell me?”

There’s a pause. “Shit- *shit*, did I really forget?” Tommy sounds guilty, horror threading through his voice, and Tubbo sighs, anger ebbing away.

He says, “Yeah, I think you did.” Tubbo forces his voice to become bright again, forces himself to shove all the fear-worry-distress away. Tommy’s safe. He’s fine. It’s okay now. “Hey, it’s alright. You’re back now!”

Tommy’s immediately rebutting him. “No- Tubbo, I know you, don’t try to brush this off.” Tubbo wilts a little bit. Tommy’s voice goes soft. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you. I could’ve sworn I did, but I must’ve forgotten.”

Tubbo lets his shoulders relax slightly when Tommy murmurs, “I’m alright, I promise.”

“Okay,” Tubbo breathes, laying back and finally letting all the tension out of his body. “I-” Tubbo takes in a deep, shaky breath, and continues quietly, “It scares me, when you go radio-silent like that.”

Tommy starts to say, “I’m sorry-” when Tubbo keeps going, the floodgates opening for some reason.

“It reminds me of-” Breathe in. Breathe out. “It reminds me of the prison,” Tubbo barely whispers, hand clenching into the bed beside him. Tommy sucks in a breath.

He hears a faint, “*Oh*, ” from the other side, which oddly is what makes Tubbo let out a quiet laugh.

“Yeah,” he responds.

“Tubs, I’m-” and now it’s Tommy’s turn to take a shallow breath in. “I’m sorry,” he says softly, reassuring. “I’ll make sure to tell you when I’m not gonna be online for a little while, in the future. I’m sorry I made you remember that.”

Tubbo shakes his head. “Don’t be getting all guilty on me,” Tubbo threatens lightly, and Tommy lets out a little bit of a surprised laugh. “I’m fine, I was just scared. I’ll get over it. Though,” Tubbo adds, “You’d better tell me if this happens again, or I *will* steal your kneecaps.” Tommy lets out a startled snort, and Tubbo grins a little.

“Just tell me, and I’ll be fine,” Tubbo repeats quietly. It comes out entirely too sincere, and Tommy quiets.

“I will,” he promises, and Tubbo believes him.

There’s a comfortable silence. Tubbo swipes at his eyes briefly and makes himself comfortable in bed. “So,” he begins, “How was the trip?”

“Oh!” Tubbo can almost *see* the way Tommy must’ve perked up, undoubtedly excited. “Oh, Tubbo, it was *so* much fun, you can’t even *imagine*-”

Tubbo snorts. “You say that as if I haven’t gone camping before,” he retorts dryly. Tommy huffs.

“Tubbo, just let me *have* this!”

“Yeah, alright, alright.” Laughing, Tubbo concedes.

“*Thank* you! Anyway, there was this huge mountain- and when I say huge, it was fuckin’ *ginormous*, like- the fuckin’ final fight mountain, and...”

-

Tommy still watches YouTube a lot.

He doesn’t do it as much anymore – streaming takes up a lot of his time, and he unashamedly spends the brunt of his free time on call with Tubbo, anyway. But, at night when he can’t sleep and Tubbo’s already sleeping and there’s no one he wants to watch streaming, he pulls up YouTube and watches a few videos.

Normally they’re not even Minecraft related; Tommy really likes watching music videos, or documentaries about various animals. But, tonight, he decides to watch some Minecraft. The first few results when he searches it up are boring, but-

Absently scrolling, his eyes catch on a name, and he freezes. Shakes his head. Presses the heels of his hands into his eyes and holds them there, for a second.

Then he looks again.

The name’s still the same.

No fucking way.

He instantly scrambles for his phone, before he thinks better of it, putting the phone down. He- he shouldn’t bother Tubbo with this. Not while he’s asleep, and not when Tommy’s not sure he has anything to be afraid of anyway.

Slowly, Tommy breathes in. He breathes out, shoves his panic down deep and forces himself to not think about it. Tentatively, he presses play on the video – on *Wilbur Soot – The Invisible Door Prank*.

As soon as he hears the voice, he’s fighting to keep back his tears. He- he wasn’t sure, even when he saw the name, whether it was gonna be the same as with Philza, as with Tubbo, but

sure enough, it is. It's- he's a spitting fucking image of Tommy's older brother, and the *longing* slams into him like a truck.

He *misses* Wilbur. He tries to not mention it around Tubbo too much, especially since he knows Tubbo and Wilbur didn't part on the best terms. And Tommy probably *shouldn't* miss him – Wilbur has done so much damage to Tommy, to everything Tommy cares about. Even at the very end, even after Tommy had started distancing himself from him, Wilbur was still finding ways to get under Tommy's skin and hurt him.

Tommy doesn't know if it was on purpose or not. If Wilbur was trying to get better or not. He tried to figure it out back then; he still doesn't know the answer.

He's so tired of trying to figure it out.

But this- this Wilbur seems similar, yet so, *so* different at the same time. His laugh is the same. His smile is the same. He has the same speech patterns – he acts so *similar* to the Wilbur from before everything that it *aches*.

Still, Tommy can't stop himself from sinking into his bed and continuing to watch the video. There's- there's something soothing about this Wilbur. He's mischievous – he spends the whole entire video messing with other people, and he just seems so much *lighter* than the Wilbur Tommy left behind all that time ago.

He's so reminiscent of the older brother Tommy used to have, before- everything.

It hurts.

Tommy keeps watching.

He makes it to the end of the video, and the yearning for his brother is so, so strong. Ender – he wants Wilbur back. He wants back the brother who stood strong with him for years, who helped him grow up, who he founded a nation with, who patched up his wounds, who helped him through panic attacks, who laughed with him and sang with him and cried with him and-

Fuck, he *misses Wilbur*.

This Wilbur isn't the same, but- Tommy could see becoming friends with him. He could see learning to love him again, although he *really* doubts that'd ever be able to happen. They run in completely different circles, it's- it's unlikely.

That doesn't stop him from hoping.

He goes into Wilbur's channel, ignoring the little voice inside him that whispers *this isn't helping you, this isn't helping, it's only making it worse*. The voice sounds like Ranboo's. He was always stupidly persistent about making sure Tubbo and Tommy did self-care – and also stupidly hypocritical about following his own advice.

Fuck, now he misses Ranboo, too.

There's quite a few videos, but Tommy scrolls down to the bottom to watch the first one. But, when he clicks onto it-

His blood goes cold.

Schlatt. Wilbur and fucking *Schlatt* are friends. Instantly, the trepidation in Tommy's stomach grows ten-fold. For himself, but mainly for Tubbo.

Schlatt, who had Tubbo executed. Schlatt, who Tubbo quietly admitted to him still haunts his nightmares. Schlatt, who exiled Wilbur and Tommy, but who also abused Tubbo to the point that he couldn't stand being touched by Tommy for *weeks*.

Schlatt, who they can't be sure isn't in this world with them, too.

Tommy takes a deep breath in, lets it out. He has three options: he doesn't tell Tubbo about this. That's an impossibility. Tubbo needs to know about this – especially since if Schlatt *is* the same, they need to both prepare together. So there are really two options: Tommy watches the videos, then shares his observations with Tubbo, or he tells Tubbo right away.

It's three in the morning. Tubbo's asleep. He knows that they both have each other on their favorites list – Tubbo would wake up if Tommy called. But Tommy *really* doesn't want to take away from Tubbo's sleep if he doesn't have to.

And so, he takes a moment to collect himself, and clicks on the very first video.

It's...interesting. Tommy can see the (mostly) clear differences between *his* Wilbur and the Wilbur of this world, but he just can't seem to separate *their* Schlatt from this Schlatt. He tries, he does, but he just can't. Maybe it's the lack of facecam, but Schlatt just seems so *similar*.

Tommy vows to keep himself and Tubbo away from him as much as possible.

He clicks away from that video only a couple minutes in, and finds another one to watch that *doesn't* have Schlatt. And...it's comforting.

His brother's not back. But...it almost feels, when he falls back asleep again, that he's with Tommy, talking to him until he falls asleep.

It's nicer than it should be.

-

"You saw *Wilbur*? And *Schlatt*?"

Tubbo's voice goes *far* too high-pitched, breaking with fear. Tommy hastens to reassure him. "Yeah, I did, but- Wil seems like he's like Phil. He's different."

A silence. Tommy wishes he could see Tubbo's face, get an idea of how he's feeling, but they're only audio calling at the moment as Tommy's walking to school. "And Schlatt?" he asks, quiet. He sounds calm. Tommy knows better.

Tommy says hesitantly, “I...don’t know.” There’s a hint of a shaky exhale from the other end. Tommy winces. “He’s probably different, but...he seems really similar. I trust him a little more because he’s with Wil, but- I don’t know,” he finishes lamely.

He gives Tubbo a moment to process, looking down and kicking at a rock on the ground. “Okay,” Tubbo says slowly. “Okay. We should- we should probably stay away from Schlatt for now.”

“Yeah,” Tommy agrees, climbing onto the bus as it arrives.

“And you think Wilbur’s decent?”

Yes, Tommy wants to say, but he- he can’t guarantee that. He’s self-aware enough to know that he’s always been a little too trusting of Wilbur. He’s always been a little too forgiving, a little too willing to let things slide.

Only when it comes to Tommy, though. He’s not willing to let Wilbur hurt Tubbo again. Not now, not ever.

“I can’t guarantee anything,” Tommy says carefully. “But...I do think he’s better, at least.”

Tubbo lets out a slow breath. *Fuck*, Tommy hates the distance between them. He wants to give Tubbo a hug. Fuck distance. Fuck travel time. Teleportation should be a thing. “Okay, well, it’s not like we’re going to be able to interact with either anytime soon,” Tubbo concludes, and Tommy nods.

“Yeah. It probably won’t be an issue for a long time.” Tommy’s bus arrives at his school, and he stands. “Look, Tubs, I’ve gotta go now,” he says, climbing down.

“Alright. Talk to you later, big man.” Tubbo’s voice has gone calm again. Tommy still can tell that Tubbo’s shaken.

“I’ll call you later,” Tommy reassures, and then hangs up. He takes a moment to breathe in, breathe out. Calm himself down, too.

Tommy’s still nervous, but he’s sure it’ll be fine for a while.

Chapter End Notes

sbi enjoyers get ready :D

thanks for reading!!! <3 and be sure to let me know if you caught the one piece reference in the comments :D

trepidation

Chapter Summary

“Tubbo, hey,” he says tiredly once he picks up, suddenly exhausted.

Tubbo responds, “Hello, Tommy.” There’s already trepidation in his tone. Tommy can’t blame him.

“I saw another name today,” he says, fiddling with the hem of his shirt. Tubbo sighs, audible over the phone. Tommy impulsively switches to facetime – Tubbo responds in kind. He’s glad.

“Who was it?” He asks, looking wary.

Tommy closes his eyes, shoulders slumping. “Technoblade.”

Chapter Notes

hi guys! before we launch into it, i just wanted to say thank you all for the support - it really means the world to me. you're all incredible, and i hope you're having amazing holiday seasons <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Everything is not, in fact, fine for a while.

After Tommy discovers Wilbur’s channel, it seems like every single popular Minecraft streamer and/or youtuber is *determined* to make themselves known. Phil’s on the trending tab more and more. Tommy stops being able to scroll past – stops being able to *ignore* – the countless other names Tommy’s been trying hard for *years* to forget about.

The one name that really gets Tommy – aka, the one that almost sends him into a panic attack – is *Technoblade*. He’s been a youtuber for a *while*; honestly, Tommy thinks he probably saw Techno’s- *Technoblade*’s- name when he was younger and didn’t believe in his memories as much as he does now, and he decided to ignore it, like he did Phil. Philza.

He can’t ignore it anymore. Staring at the name for a bit longer, he breathes in pattern (“*In for four, hold for seven, out for eight.* ”) until he feels his breathing slow down.

(He recognizes that voice as Ranboo’s, now. The reminder hurts.)

He's calling Tubbo before he can convince himself otherwise.

"Tubbo, hey," he says tiredly once he picks up, suddenly exhausted.

Tubbo responds, "Hello, Tommy." There's already trepidation in his tone. Tommy can't blame him.

"I saw another name today," he says, fiddling with the hem of his shirt. Tubbo sighs, audible over the phone. Tommy impulsively switches to facetime – Tubbo responds in kind. He's glad.

"Who was it?" He asks, looking wary.

Tommy closes his eyes, shoulders slumping. "Technoblade."

This time, he can see Tubbo's eyes go wide, the image going shaky as Tubbo's hands no-doubt start trembling. He's quiet for a moment, before he says tightly, "And?"

"I...I haven't watched any of his videos yet," Tommy admits in a whisper, looking down at the ground. "Couldn't bring myself to."

Tubbo sighs, "Yeah, that's fair." There's a silence. "Okay- you know what, Tommy, we're just gonna ignore this again."

Tommy raises his eyebrows. "Ignore it?"

"Well, it's not like we can do anything about it – and we won't be able to confirm either way whether Technoblade's the real one or not, right?" Tubbo says reasonably. Tommy lets out a little, relieved sigh, the knot in his stomach easing slightly.

"Yeah, I guess not." Tubbo grins, and it only looks a little forced.

"Woo! Willful ignorance for the win!"

Tommy laughs haltingly. "Hell yeah!"

-

Despite what they'd agreed, when Tommy sees Dream's name two weeks later, he *actually* ends up having a panic attack.

It- it doesn't feel real at first. He can't ignore it, not like everyone else. His eyes stick on the name for what feels like ages. But it doesn't sink in until Tommy, in a daze, presses on a video and lets it play.

And- it's his *voice*. The tone's different, but the voice is the *exact same*, and-

"*Tommy, put your things in the hole.*"

"*Oh, L'Manberg's story is over, Tommy. But ours is far from over.*"

“You’ve gotta choose, Tommy – Tubbo, or the disks?”

“Say your goodbyes.”

“I can bring people back to life!”

“Why don’t you go see him, then?”

Tommy comes back to himself, and the twenty-minute video is already half over. He gasps for breath- his chest *hurts*. Half aware, he brings a hand up to swipe at the tears streaming down his cheeks. It takes an embarrassing amount of time for his breathing to come back under control. As soon as it does, though, he frantically closes out the video.

He grips at his armrests, and just- stares, for probably far too long.

Finally, he’s calmed down (as much as he’s able to, at least) and he reaches for his phone. Tubbo answers immediately, as always. “Tubbo,” Tommy says, voice shaky. He can’t even both to hide his distress.

“Tommy?” Tubbo asks, voice concerned. Tommy takes a deep breath in, letting it out slowly.

He says, “I...I saw him.”

It’s silent on the other end, before Tubbo seems to get what he’s implying, a sharp inhale audible from the other end. “...Dream?” He asks quietly.

Tommy nods, before he remembers Tubbo can’t see him. “Yeah,” he breathes. He can’t hear anything from Tubbo’s end for a while- and some part of him, the part always ready to help his best friend despite his own distress, the part that always wants Tubbo to be alright, speaks up.

“Hey,” he says lowly. “We- we agreed that we wouldn’t freak out about this, remember?”

Tubbo’s silent. Then, “Like you’re one to talk in that regard,” Tubbo manages to joke, and Tommy snorts slightly.

“Look, I never promised to not be a hypocrite,” Tommy jabs back. His tone falls into seriousness again, though, and he says firmly, “Listen- it’s probably not him. It’s probably-”

“But it could be,” Tubbo interjects quietly, and Tommy winces.

“Yeah, but-” He takes in a deep breath. “Most signs point towards him- him *not* being here, and-”

Tommy closes his eyes, and he whispers, “I’m so tired of being afraid.”

Tubbo’s silent. “...Yeah. Yeah, me too.”

A pause.

“We’ll be fine,” Tubbo murmurs, not optimistic but not entirely pessimistic-sounding, either. Tommy nods, and forces his shoulders to relax, replying, “Yeah.”

“Yeah, we will be.”

-

The next few months pass that way – them studiously ignoring anyone that might be able to hurt them – names like *Nihachu* and *Fundy* and *Eret* and *Sapnap* – and continuing on streaming. Tommy’s guilty pleasure becomes watching Wilbur’s videos – and, with every video he watches, he becomes more and more convinced he’s not the same.

This Wilbur’s kind. He’s mischievous, and has fun messing with others, but it’s – as far as Tommy can tell – never malicious. He just seems *fun*. Wilbur becomes his favorite youtuber; and his favorite streamer, too, when he starts streaming.

It doesn’t change anything, of course. All it does is make Tommy feel guilty, for indulging in something that he can never have again.

Of course, him having that thought is like a challenge to the universe. One day, Tommy receives a DM from none other than JoshA20.

Hey, it reads. We’ve been very impressed with your growth recently. So, we’d like to invite you to SMP Earth.

-

“Oh my *god*,” Tommy groans, placing his head in his hands. Tubbo winces sympathetically, watching the little image on his screen have a crisis. So much for them not having to confront their issues for a while, Tubbo guesses. This is- well, this is very imminent.

“Tubbo, what- what do I *do*?” Tommy sounds lost. Tubbo’s always hated when he sounds like that.

He bites back the instant urge to tell Tommy to ignore the invitation, to delete the DM, to throw it away. Wilbur’s on this server, along with a *ridiculous* amount of creators. They haven’t even taken a look at the member list, yet. Tubbo’s kind of scared to find out just who they’re – *Tommy’s*, Tubbo hasn’t been invited, he reminds himself – going to have to deal with.

Tubbo wants to tell Tommy to decline it, because this could be dangerous. But, he’s not stupid. He can tell Tommy would regret not doing this, if not only from the content creator standpoint. This is a *huge* opportunity; this SMP will grow his viewer base a ridiculous amount, and Tubbo knows that’ll be great for Tommy and his future.

But, also- Tubbo’s not blind. He knows Tommy watches Wilbur’s videos, knows Tommy finds comfort in him, even if he’s not actually interacting with him. And he knows that if Tommy threw away his chance to actually *meet* Wilbur, he’d regret that forever.

So, he says, “Look, Tommy, if it were up to me, you’d stay the fuck away from there.” Tommy groans quietly, threading his hands through his hair and tugging on the strands, which- “Stop that,” Tubbo says sharply. Tommy does. He lets his voice soften, then, and says earnestly, “But, Tommy, I also know you.”

Tommy looks up at that, and Tubbo continues, “You’d regret it forever if you didn’t give this a try.”

Tubbo’s best friend is quiet for a moment. Tubbo adds softly, “I know you miss him. You should try.”

“I...” Tommy swallows, the movement in his throat visible. “I do,” he barely breathes, as if he’s ashamed of it. “I miss him. I hope it’s not him, but I *miss* him.”

Tubbo sinks back a little in his seat, his smile growing wistful. “I know.” *I miss him too*, Tubbo doesn’t say.

Wilbur was never Tubbo’s brother. He was always Tommy’s, and Tubbo never showed how much he *yearned* to be a part of that family too. He doesn’t plan on doing so now, either. “Okay,” Tommy whispers, resolve evident in his tone, and Tubbo’s smile grows a little. “Okay. I’ll do it.”

“Good,” Tubbo replies, and Tommy gives him a heartbreakingly hopeful look.

“Thanks,” he says quietly. Tubbo snorts.

“If you ever thank me for being a good friend again, I’ll hit you,” he retorts dryly, and Tommy actually laughs at that.

“Yeah, fair.” Tommy’s smile grows soft, and he adds, “Love you, Tubs.”

Tubbo’s heart is warm. “Love you too, Toms.”

-

Tommy doesn’t think he’s ever been this nervous in his *life*.

Well- okay, he was more nervous before the duel against Dream, and before the Election, and before he was Exiled, and... okay, yeah, he’s had plenty scarier moments than this. But, in *this* life, he doesn’t think he’s ever been more nervous.

Wilbur’s in one of the voice channels. Tommy’s been added to the SMP Earth server, and he’s about to start streaming on it – their suggestion, so that his viewers get the *authentic experience*. He’s going to have his first time talking to Wilbur in forever- *ever* be live in front of thousands of viewers. Great.

Well, there’s nothing he can do. Better get on with it.

He goes live, and, terror and excitement both roiling intensely in his gut, joins the VC.

In all honesty, Tommy's not sure what he was expecting, when he joined. Maybe some ridicule, because of him being a child and a new member to the server on top of that. Or maybe some over-exaggerated teasing, because that's how it seems to go a lot of the time when he meets people the first time. Instead, though, it's just...normal.

Wilbur greets him, and emotion slams into Tommy like a truck. He breathes through it, blinks back his tears, and makes it through the first greetings alright. It's- hard, not interacting with his brother like he normally would – teasing and laughing and knowing what buttons to push to get the funniest reactions from him – but he deals.

And, ironically, it's a little bit of a relief when Wilbur treats him as if they've just met. He's a little bit reserved, a little more polite than Tommy's used to him acting around Tommy. It stings a bit, but it mostly just adds to the feeling Tommy has that they're *not* the same person, after all.

Even when Wilbur starts ribbing him a little more, especially when Tommy starts letting his persona shine through and starts being the little shit he's known to be, he still doesn't react the same way *his* Wilbur would've.

"Tommy- Tommy, what are you *doing*?" Wilbur asks. He sounds confused, which is good. Tommy lives for causing people to be in a constant state of confusion.

"I'm building a bridge from your house to mine!" He says cheerfully. "As a show of good-will!"

"As a show of good-will," Wilbur echoes, definitely amused this time. Tommy grins, a warm pocket of *something* growing near his heart. "For what, exactly?"

"For our alliance, *duh!*"

"Ah, yes, of course, of course."

A good chunk of the stream passes like that – Tommy building a house, and just- confusing the shit out of Wilbur. It's fun, he's got to admit. A while later, though, he decides to go exploring.

Somehow, his exploring leads him *right* to fucking *Technoblade and Philza*.

Just his luck.

"Hello, boys!" He crows when he gets there, hiding his shakiness under a layer of pure obnoxious loudness as he joins their VC.

"Oh- hello!" Philza's the first to respond. He sounds slightly confused, which again, Tommy's glad for, but he mostly sounds warm. Welcoming.

Instantly, Tommy's heart starts to ache.

"Hullo," Technoblade echoes after, sounding disinterested. They were building something when Tommy'd arrived, and though Philza had stopped to come over and greet Tommy,

Technoblade hadn't. Instantly, Tommy's coming up with ways to grab Technoblade's attention.

Tommy's gaze drifts over to the stack of chests off to the side.

Oh. That's an idea.

"So, how are you both?" Tommy asks, slowly inching his way over to the chests.

"Good, good, can't complain," Philza says casually. Technoblade just hums noncommittally. Neither of them seem to have noticed where Tommy's headed. Good.

Tommy replies, "Always good to hear!" He clicks open a chest, scanning it quickly, and- *oooooh, golden apples!* He steals some of those, and snatches some diamonds for good measure, before bounding away from their supplies.

His chat is screaming with laughter, and he grins. "Well, a pleasure doing business with you!" He says cheekily, and this time, both characters spin around.

"Wait- is the first thing you did while meeting us fucking *stealing from us?*" Philza asks disbelievingly. Tommy laughs.

"Maybe!" With that, he opens one of the planes, and jumps in it to fly away.

"You little shit-" Philza curses, and Tommy salutes to the camera.

"Cya later!"

He does not, in fact, get to fly away. Technoblade, in an instant, is on top of Tommy. Before Tommy can even react, he's staring at the dead character screen, the respawn button taunting in front of him.

"You've gotta do better than that if you're gonna try to steal my stuff," Technoblade says dryly. At that, Tommy can't stop himself from laughing.

He challenges, "Oh, it's *on!*" and respawns just to try again.

"Child, you are *going* to lose."

"First off- I'm not a child! Second off- I'm *going* to win."

The stream lasts much longer than Tommy was intending. Tommy gets sucked into this game, where Tommy tries to steal Philza and Technoblade's stuff, and they (mostly Technoblade) kill him again and again. And it's *fun*. Philza's laughing pretty much the entire time, and Technoblade seems to also be having fun. He's laughing so much more than he ever did in Tommy's past life. With every moment that Tommy irritates the shit out of them and they don't react badly, he relaxes slightly.

Honestly, when he'd decided to steal from them, it was a test. The Philza and Technoblade of Tommy's past life never would've put up with this sort of stuff. Technoblade was lenient

when it came to Tommy stealing his stuff, but if he'd come back again and again and *again* and tried to steal, Technoblade would've at least sounded annoyed.

This Technoblade doesn't sound annoyed in the slightest. If anything, he's also having fun with this, given the way he hasn't told Tommy to fuck off yet. Philza's acting annoyed, but something in Tommy tells him it's just a bit – just for the cameras.

He could be wrong. He could be biting off more than he can chew, and once they're off camera, he's going to regret doing this. But- as of now, he's having *fun*.

Later on, Wilbur joins them. When Tommy'd been talking to him earlier, he could tell Wilbur was a little uptight – maybe a little uncertain being around someone new? Whatever it is, once he's with Technoblade, with Philza, he loosens up and starts messing with Tommy just as much as Technoblade is.

Ender, this is better than any sort of dynamic Tommy used to have with the three all together in his past life. There, Wilbur was Philza's son, and therefore had a sort of relationship with Technoblade. They weren't that close, but they knew and trusted each other (well...until Wilbur went insane). Philza was distant, but he genuinely loved Wilbur.

Tommy... Wilbur found him, when he was small, and took him in. He cared for Tommy when no one else would. But, Philza... never really cared about Tommy. He let him live in his home, but he didn't really interact with Tommy, no matter how much Tommy tried. And Technoblade was even more distant – when he was there, he would say hi to Tommy and that's about the extent of it. Tommy got trained by him maybe *once*, and that was it.

Here- he's obviously not a part of the dynamic, not one of the *Sleepy Bois*, but they make sure he's included, even if it means they're teasing him a lot. He can tell it's not malicious. He worries, a little, about maybe going too far with his own antics, but in the end he just has fun causing as much chaos as he can.

Once the stream ends, Wilbur lets out a bit of a giggle. "Well," he says, sounding breathless. "That was fun. Tommy, congrats, you are the *craziest* motherfucker I've ever met."

Tommy snorts. "Glad to hear it," he replies easily, and even Technoblade laughs at that.

"Seriously, though, Tommy," Technoblade says, "This was fun. It was- an interesting way to meet you, for sure, but the viewers loved it."

"Yeah," Philza chimes in. "Good job, mate."

Tommy takes a second to just *grin*, trying his best to fight down his blush. They never praised him like this, either. "Thanks, guys. It was really great meeting you all, too," he says a bit shyly. He yawns, then, surprising even himself. He blinks.

His facecam's still on, so the others all see and let out little chuckles. "Seems like the child needs to go to sleep," Technoblade jests, and Tommy glares at him.

"Not a *child*," he says, pouting, which just causes them to laugh at him more.

“Yeah, yeah,” Wilbur breaks in. His smile grows a bit softer, and he says warmly, “Go to sleep, Tommy. We’ll see you tomorrow.”

Tommy yawns again, and rubs at his eyes. “Alright,” he concedes. “Nice meeting you guys, again! Goodnight!”

He exits the call, and just stares at the screen for a bit. He just did that.

Holy *shit*, he just did that.

Tubbo’s facetimed him a couple times already – starting from when his stream had ended, he notes amusedly – and he calls Tubbo back as he moves back to his bed. “Hey, Tubbo,” he grins, collapsing down onto the bed.

“Well? How was it?” Tubbo asks with no preamble, and Tommy laughs.

“Jeez, a little patience, Tubbo,” he teases. Tubbo raises his eyebrows.

“Tommy, I will kick out your kneecaps. I know where you live, you know, I’ll do it.”

Tommy rolls his eyes fondly. “Alright, alright.” And, a small smile spreading across his face, “Tubs, it was- it was *good*.”

Tubbo smiles slightly. “It was, huh?” he asks. Tommy nods. “You looked like you were having fun,” Tubbo comments.

“Yeah, they were...a little standoffish, which isn’t surprising, but they all were nice and actually *included* me.” Tommy’s voice goes a little hushed, and he says, “After stream, they all- they all told me I did good.”

“Did they?” Tubbo asks, but he’s smiling fondly, and Tommy knows he already knows the answer.

Still, Tommy responds, “*Yeah*. They told me everyone enjoyed it, and that they had fun.” He’s quiet for a moment, then murmurs, a bit more subdued, “The others would’ve never done that.”

Tubbo doesn’t respond for a bit. “So you think it’s not the real ones, then?” he asks in a whisper, and Tommy nods hesitantly.

“I don’t think we can know for sure, yet, but...I think we’re safe.” Tommy thinks for a moment. “I’ll probably start dropping some hints on them while we hang out, though. Just to be sure.”

Tubbo raises his eyebrows. “What sort of hints?”

Tommy shrugs. “Hints,” he says vaguely. Tubbo rolls his eyes.

“Alright then, you do that.” Tommy narrows his eyes slightly at the slightly envious tone in Tubbo’s voice – Tubbo’s smile seems to have grown a little wistful at that point, too. A little

lonely. And in that moment, Tommy decides – fuck it, Tubbo’s getting onto SMP Earth. He doesn’t care what he has to do. He’s doing it.

Tommy doesn’t voice the thought, though, and instead yawns again. “Alright, Big T, I think it’s time for me to go to sleep,” Tommy admits, and Tubbo nods.

“Yeah, you look tired as shit.”

“Hey! *Rude!*”

Tubbo shrugs, grinning cheekily. “Just calling it as I see it!” Tommy rolls his eyes.

“Yeah, yeah. Night, Tubs.”

“Night, Toms.”

-

Tommy’s always been the type of person to reach out to people a *lot*. In this life or the one he lived prior, he’s always been the one to make friends first (or enemies first). He’s just that sort of person. So, when he tells Tubbo that he’s going to reach out to Wilbur, Philza, and Technoblade on their own, off-stream, Tubbo’s reaction is far from surprised.

“Just promise to be careful,” Tubbo sighs when Tommy mentions his plans, sounding long-suffering even over the phone.

Tommy laughs a little, and promises, “I’ll be careful, I promise.”

“Good.”

The first time he does it is with Philza.

He’s...he’s struggling, a lot, with managing his Twitter. Since he joined SMP Earth, he’s gotten even more attention. And it’s not a bad thing, really, but it does lead to him being hated a *lot* on Twitter whenever he makes even a single mistake. He’s been trying to block everything, but it’s- it’s just not working. He can’t stand to go on Twitter at all, now.

Whenever he does, he just wants to cry.

Hey, Philza, he types, hesitating over the send button. He knows he’s gotta do it at some point, but- it still terrifies him a bit, reaching out to Philza on his own. Still, he adds on, *can you help me with something?*

Philza responds almost immediately, sending, *sure! what do you need help with?*

Tommy hesitates again. *Can we call?* He asks.

A call comes through immediately. Tommy takes in a deep breath, and answers. Philza’s warm smile meets him, and instantly some tension seeps from Tommy’s shoulders. He doesn’t know how this Philza always has that effect.

“What’s up, mate?” he asks.

“Thanks for being willing to call,” Tommy says first, before he continues, “I’ve...uh, I’ve been having a lot of issues with Twitter, recently.”

Philza lets out a little noise of understanding. “Ah. Haters, huh?” he asks sympathetically, and Tommy nods, growing a little downtrodden. He doesn’t understand – in both lives, all he’s managed to attract from the masses is hatred. No matter what he does, he can never shake it off.

He doesn’t get it.

“Aw, mate,” Philza murmurs, and Tommy snaps to attention. Philza has a kind, sadness-tinged smile on his face, and Tommy realizes with a start that his own distress must’ve shown on his face. “Hey, it’s not your fault, whatever everyone says about you, okay?” Philza reassures. Tommy’s heart clenches.

“Yeah, I know,” Tommy whispers, bowing his head. “It’s just...”

Philza hums soothingly. “Haters are assholes,” he says softly. “They’re dicks, and they don’t know you, so don’t let them throw you off, alright?”

Tommy takes a deep breath in. “Yeah, okay,” he agrees, and Philza gives him an encouraging smile.

“There we go. By the way- you can call me Phil, everyone else does anyway. And we’re friends, so you certainly can.” Tommy’s smile grows a bit brighter.

“Okay, Phil,” he says, and Phil grins.

“Alright. Now, on Twitter, you’re gonna want to start with...”

Phil helps him for an hour with learning to block certain keywords and avoid the worst sides of the internet. He’s not patronizing at all and sprinkles streaming advice throughout, and by the end of the call, Tommy truly feels like Phil’s one of his friends.

And in one night, Tommy already feels safe around him.

-

About a week after Tommy first meets Technoblade, he wakes up from a nightmare.

It’s not one of the *horrible* nightmares – those have grown rarer and rarer, since he met Tubbo again and they started actually talking things out. But he- he still doesn’t want to fall back asleep. Not when the images are still haunting his brain.

So, he does what he normally does, and plops down into his desk chair to log onto Minecraft and kill some people in Bedwars until he feels better again, or the daytime comes.

This time, though, when Tommy logs onto discord – out of habit, not necessarily because he expects anyone to be online – Technoblade’s there. *Ah, right*, Tommy thinks stupidly, staring at the little red icon next to his profile picture. *American*.

Technoblade’s awake because it’s only like...7:30pm for him. Weird.

Tommy debates with himself for a bit. He’s been wanting to get to know Technoblade as he is off-stream – both to figure out for real whether it’s the old Technoblade or not, and also just to get to know him as a friend.

Technoblade’s a cool person, Tommy thinks. It’d be nice to be friends with him.

Would Technoblade want to play Bedwars with a sleep-deprived TommyInnit at three in the morning? Probably not. Will Tommy ask anyway? Yes.

Hey, Techno Blade, Tommy sends. *Wanna play some bedwars?*

Technoblade doesn’t respond right away, which isn’t surprising. He’s probably in the middle of a game of his own, anyway. To alleviate Tommy’s anxiety, he spins around in his chair and fiddles with a loose thread in his shirt. It starts unraveling immediately; Tommy doesn’t care enough to stop.

Thankfully for the state of his shirt, Technoblade responds within a couple of minutes.

why are you awake? It reads. Tommy rolls his eyes. What an unhelpful answer.

Couldn’t sleep, he says. *So, bedwars?*

sure, why not, Technoblade responds, and Tommy can’t stop himself from punching a hand into the air. Immediately, he calls Technoblade, who takes entirely too long to pick up. Tommy’s got Minecraft up and running by the time he hears Technoblade’s voice in his headphones.

“Child, you’ve gotta give me at least 2-3 business days to prepare myself if you’re gonna call me,” are the first words out of Technoblade’s mouth. Tommy snorts, making sure to keep himself quiet. It wouldn’t do to wake up his parents, after all.

“Bedwars waits for no man,” Tommy responds cheekily, and Technoblade sighs.

“Yeah, yeah, just get on already. I haven’t got all day.”

Tommy retorts, “I’m quite sure you *have* got all day, actually, don’t you do this with all your time?”

There’s a pause. For a second, Tommy fears he’s overstepped some sort of boundary, but then Technoblade lets out a sigh that sounds more like a half-sigh-half-laugh. “I’ve actually got a really strict upload schedule I need to keep to, Tommy,” Technoblade responds dryly.

“C’mon, you can’t throw me off my rhythm like this.”

Tommy laughs at that, full-bodied. Technoblade chuckles along, then says, “You online yet?”

“I will be in...” Tommy squints at the load bar for the server, “Approximately seventeen seconds.”

“Very specific number. I’m gonna hold you to that.”

“Thank you, I try.”

In the end, it doesn’t end up being seventeen seconds, but they’re both too distracted by laughing at Technoblade’s dramatic countdown to care.

Tommy doesn’t sleep again that night. Instead, he and Technoblade play Bedwars until about ten in the morning, at which point, they switch to streaming on SMP Earth. Technoblade teases him, Tommy does his best to be the annoying little shit he’s known to be. It’s the most fun Tommy’s had playing Bedwars and streaming in ages, disregarding the times he played with Tubbo.

And, before he knows it, at some point during that call, *Technoblade* becomes *Techno* in Tommy’s head.

-

Fuck, Tommy doesn’t think he’s ever struggled with a history assignment this much.

He’s spent what feels like hours researching for this one *very* specific piece of information he needs to find, and he just *can’t* find it. He’s searched absolutely everywhere, he swears, and the information is nowhere to be found.

Fuck.

It’s in times like these that he wishes he had an older sibling to go to. Tubbo’s great, but he sucks at history. Tommy’s parents are both asleep. And he procrastinated the assignment, so he can’t wait until morning and ask them. The only option is...

He stares at his discord DMs, and before he can convince himself otherwise, clicks on Wilbur’s.

Hey, Wilbur, sorry to bother you but can you help me with something? He rereads it like four times before he sends it, nervousness roiling in his gut. Wilbur- the Wilbur of his past life, before everything went south, always loved history. He loved knowing things, and when he *didn’t* know a thing, loved finding the information he was missing. It interested him a *lot*. Tommy can only hope this Wilbur is the same.

Plus, this Wilbur’s been really, *really* nice to Tommy so far. He started off a little standoffish, but a few days in, they’d just *clicked*. Not in the way Tubbo and Tommy did, all those months ago; it doesn’t feel like they know each other like the back of their hand just yet. But it feels like they could get there. Wilbur already seems to be softening up, and he also teases Tommy like nothing else.

It’s all Tommy could’ve ever asked for.

His discord *dings*. Wilbur's responded quickly, much to Tommy's relief. *don't worry*, Wilbur responds, *you're not being a bother. what's up?*

I'm really struggling with finding something for a history project, Tommy replies. *D'you think you'd be willing to call and help me figure it out?*

sure! Wilbur responds, and Tommy's calling without another word. "Hello, Tommy," Wilbur says, an easy grin on his face. "How may I help you on this fine evening?"

Tommy groans, slamming his head as gently as he can against the desk. "This fucking project," he grumbles into his paper. Wilbur lets out a sympathetic hum.

"What do you need help with?"

"I can't find this *one* thing about the Aztec Empire, and I've spent like *five hours* searching for it. It's fucking *nowhere*, I swear, and it's due tonight, and-"

"Whoa, whoa," Wilbur cuts in. Tommy glances up to see his hands held up, and he says soothingly, "Hey, it's alright. You don't need to panic. I can help you."

Tommy perks up. "You can?" he asks excitedly, and Wilbur grins.

"Yeah, I love history. What do you need to find?"

They spend the next hour finding the information- Wilbur's an absolute *lifesaver*, and when Tommy finishes his project and turns it in, it's like a weight off his mind. He grins victoriously at Wilbur, who smiles back.

"*Thank* you," he says sincerely. Wilbur waves a hand.

"It's no problem. I love that sort of stuff."

There's a quiet moment. It's not quite uncomfortable, but it's not super comfortable, so Tommy says, "Hey, Wilbur."

"Hm?" Wilbur hums, obviously not paying full attention.

"I wanted-" Tommy cuts himself off, taking a breath in. "I wanted to say thank you."

At that, Wilbur looks at the camera full-on. "For what?" he inquires. Tommy looks down at his hands, suddenly overwhelmingly nervous.

"For...for making me feel so welcome." Wilbur tilts his head, a soft smile making an appearance on his face, and Tommy hurries to continue, "Everyone else has been great, but you especially made sure to keep me included in everything, and put up with my antics, and also talk to me a lot off camera." Tommy looks up, giving him a shaky smile. "I just wanted to say thank you."

"Awww, Tommy," Wilbur coos, and Tommy immediately stiffens up. He will not be *patronized*, even if he feels all warm and fuzzy inside. Wilbur smiles warmly, and continues,

“No need to thank me. You’re a good kid, Tommy. It’s been a pleasure getting to know you this past week or so.”

Ender, Tommy feels so *soft*. “Thanks,” he whispers again, and Wilbur chuckles.

“You’re welcome.” Tommy bites his lip, warring with himself, and Wilbur frowns. “Was there something else?” he asks.

Tommy nods hesitantly. “I was just wondering- I’m super grateful for all of you guys, and it’s been a lot of fun, and-”

“Tommy, calm down,” Wilbur cuts in, obviously amused. “Just ask the question, I’m not going to bite your head off.”

An embarrassed smile on his face, Tommy nods. “I was wondering if you might be able to add my friend Tubbo to the SMP?” he asks, and Wilbur cocks his head.

“The kid you’re always streaming with?” he confirms, and Tommy brightens and nods.

“Yeah! He’s my best friend,” Tommy responds promptly. Wilbur raises an eyebrow, and Tommy adds on hurriedly, “Plus he’s just as funny as I am – probably more funny, sometimes, and I know we can cause a *lot* of chaos together.”

Wilbur remains silent for a moment. Tommy shrugs helplessly, “It’d be good content, too?” he offers. Wilbur huffs out a bit of a laugh, and relief curls in Tommy’s stomach.

“Tommy, you don’t have to be so nervous about asking if your friend can join,” he says warmly. “Yeah, sure, I’ll check with the others to see if it’s okay, but I see nothing wrong with it.”

Tommy can feel himself visibly brighten. “Will you, Wil? Thank you!” His cheeks flush, and he coughs slightly. “Uh- Wilbur. Wilbur, sorry.”

Wilbur laughs a little, and says, “No worries, Tommy. I don’t mind you calling me Wil.”

Tommy blushes, and looks down at his hands. He nods slightly. “Thanks again,” he says, again embarrassed.

“Of course, Tommy,” he responds. “Now, it is getting late, so I’m going to head to bed now, alright?”

Tommy nods. “Sounds good- thanks again for your help!”

“It’s not a problem. Night.” With that, Wilbur logs off. Tommy can’t stop smiling for hours after.

That night, Tommy goes to sleep happy, and has no nightmares.

-

One day, a week or so after Tommy got invited on, Tubbo gets a message inviting him to SMP Earth. Immediately, he facetimes Tommy.

“Tommy!” He yells as soon as he picks up, and Tommy’s instantly at attention.

“Tubbo!” He responds, a little teasingly. His shoulders tense up slightly, though, and Tubbo knows that if that were a troubled yell, that Tommy’d instantly be ready to fight.

“I got invited onto SMP Earth!”

Tommy’s instantly beaming. “It worked!” He shouts, before he claps his hands over his mouth, embarrassed. Tubbo narrows his eyes.

“What worked?” He asks suspiciously. Tommy shakes his head, looking the other way. Tubbo watches him for a moment, before he realizes.

Instantly, he softens.

“Tommy, you sap,” he teases, though fondness is all he knows. Tommy blushes, before he grins back a little sheepishly.

“Gotta have my partner-in-crime on there if I’m gonna commit crimes!” He responds, and Tubbo throws his head back and *laughs*.

Tubbo’s been fearing, recently, that he might be replaced. He knows his worries are dumb; he knows Tommy wouldn’t throw him away that easily. But...seeing Tommy spending more and more time with Wilbur, with Technoblade and Philza, he still couldn’t stop them.

Now, all those fears all feel stupid. The little whispers that Tommy would like Philza or Technoblade or Wilbur more- all gone, in a single instance.

Tubbo shakes himself from his thoughts and says, grinning, “We’re gonna make them regret letting both of us on here *so* bad.” Tommy snorts.

“Hell yeah we are!”

Silence falls between them for a moment, before Tubbo whispers, “...you’re sure they’re safe?”

Technoblade, who killed him. Philza, who helped blow up his country. Wilbur, who put Tubbo in charge of a country he always intended on destroying. Nervousness and fear both coil in Tubbo’s gut.

Tommy nods, and something eases within Tubbo. “I’m not positive, not yet, but- I’m pretty sure,” he says in a hushed voice. “I’m pretty sure.”

Tubbo nods, taking in a deep breath and letting it out slowly. “Okay. I trust you.” Tommy gives him a soft, warm grin.

They log onto the server without another word, and Tubbo can't wait for the chaos they'll cause.

Chapter End Notes

hope you all enjoyed!

also, since we're starting to get into smp earth stuff now, i just want to say a quick disclaimer: i did not re-watch vods to write this fic. i did some research into who was involved in smp earth, but there are going to be some inaccuracies. so just keep in mind that while this fic is set irl, there are going to be a fair few things that are different haha. this is a fic focused on the characters' relationships and healing after all, not necessarily on the events themselves.

with that said, thank you so much for reading!! love you all <3

reassurance

Chapter Summary

“Phil!”

Phil raises an eyebrow as two people join his call, calling out his name in sync. “Hello,” he says, a little hesitantly. If there’s one thing he’s learned about Tommy the past week and a half – and Tubbo, in the past hour – it’s that when they call out anyone’s name like that, it means nothing good.

“Thoughts on stabbing people?”

Phil blinks. And blinks again.

And again, for good measure.

“What?!” He asks incredulously, because seriously, what the fuck.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It doesn’t take long for Tommy and Tubbo to start causing as much chaos as they can on the server.

Like Tommy expected, but Tubbo was somewhat surprised by, everyone takes to them with mild annoyance at worst. They get yelled at when they grief stuff and killed constantly when they try to steal belongings, but they still have fun, running around the server and making everyone’s lives as difficult as possible.

For three people in particular, they have a great time quizzing them on various things to figure out whether they’re from Tommy and Tubbo’s past life, too.

That’s how Tubbo puts it, anyway. Tommy puts it as being as confusing as possible.

Either way, it’s fun.

-

“Phil!”

Phil raises an eyebrow as two people join his call, calling out his name in sync. “Hello,” he says, a little hesitantly. If there’s one thing he’s learned about Tommy the past week and a

half – and Tubbo, in the past hour – it’s that when they call out anyone’s name like that, it means nothing good.

“Thoughts on stabbing people?”

Phil blinks. And blinks again.

And again, for good measure.

“What?!” He asks incredulously, because seriously, what the fuck.

“Thoughts on stabbing people!” Tubbo echoes in a way he obviously thinks is helpful. Phil would beg to differ.

Phil answers, “Uh. Don’t do it?”

“Noted. And thoughts on blowing up a nation?”

Phil has *so many questions*. “Again, don’t do it?” Phil frowns. “Do I need to track you two down and make sure you’re not getting up to some shit?”

Tommy chirps, “Nope! Thanks, Phil, ‘cya later!”

They both leave his call in sync, and Phil just stares at the screen, baffled.

He turns towards his chat, and says, still sounding shocked, probably, “Chat, what the fuck?”

They don’t have an answer.

-

“Alright, so Phil checks out.”

Tubbo nods, jotting that down on a notebook. “Next up: Technoblade,” he announces.

-

“So, Technoblade!”

Techno raises his eyebrows at the screen. That tone never means anything good, based on the two-weeks-worth of interactions he’s had with the enigma that is TommyInnit. He knows even less about Tubbo, but from what he can tell, he’s just as chaotic as Tommy, if not worse. “Yes, Tommy?”

“Thoughts on withers?”

Techno blinks. That is...not what he was expecting.

“Uh,” he says lamely. “I like them? Kinda?”

“Hmmm,” is all that Tommy responds with. Tubbo asks, immediately after, “And thoughts on anarchy?”

Techno nods. This, at least, he can answer. “A solid philosophy.”

“...alright then.” With that, Tommy leaves the call, Tubbo soon after, and Techno’s left staring at the screen.

What the hell was that?

-

Tubbo and Tommy meet eyes through their facetime call. “Inconclusive,” they say in sync.

“Though...Techno still probably wouldn’t have responded like that for the first one,” Tommy says consideringly.

Tubbo shakes his head. “Still inconclusive,” he says, writing that down.

Tommy nods. “Fair enough.” He brightens, then. “Alright, Wilbur time!”

-

“Wilbur, my *friend!*”

“Oh, no, what’ve you done now,” Wilbur asks, deadpan, continuing on with what he’s doing. He’s pretty sure he doesn’t want to know what Tommy and Tubbo have done now. He’s also pretty sure he doesn’t get a choice.

Tubbo chirps – and he seems awfully at ease interacting with Wilbur, even though at this point they’ve known each other for less than 24 hours – “We just have a couple questions for you, Wilbur!”

“What is this, an interrogation?” He asks, lips curling up into an amused smile before he can help it. And dammit, if he isn’t already fond of these kids.

“Yup!” They answer as one, and Wilbur sighs.

“Alright, have at it.”

Tommy begins, “Okay- first off, thoughts on drugs?”

Wilbur blinks. What? “What?” He echoes his thoughts, because, again, *what?*

“Thoughts on drugs!” Tubbo repeats, and Wilbur sighs.

“You two are fifteen and sixteen. If you’re doing drugs, I’m going to have to stop you.”

“Fair enough! Moving on,” Tubbo transitions smoothly, “Thoughts on revolutions?”

“Viva la revolution,” Wilbur replies on instinct. Both kids laugh.

“Yeah, that makes sense,” Tommy responds in amusement. “Last question: thoughts on blowing up a country with TNT?”

Wilbur blinks.

“Uh- first off, don’t blow *anything* big up, especially not countries. Secondly, am I going to have to track you two down to make sure you don’t blow one of the countries up? Because I *will* ban you, don’t test me.”

They both just laugh, and Wilbur blinks again.

“Don’t worry about it! Thanks Wilbur!”

They both leave, and Wilbur’s just left staring after them.

Huh.

-

“That’s pretty conclusive too, I’d say!” Tommy says, satisfied. Tubbo nods, a little more hesitant.

“Yeah, I’m still a...little hesitant, but yeah, I agree.”

Tommy grins at the screen. A happy, light feeling is flooding through him. Tubbo doesn’t look quite as happy as Tommy does, but he still looks relieved. Tommy’s glad.

This was for Tubbo, too. Honestly, *more* so for him than for Tommy. Tubbo deserves to feel safe. He deserves to *know* that they don’t have to be afraid anymore.

He’s glad he could help Tubbo feel even a little bit safer.

-

The months pass like the first day. Tommy and Tubbo continue reigning chaos on the SMP Earth server, continue getting closer to everyone on there, but particularly Phil, Wilbur, and Techno. Tommy’s having the absolute time of his *life*, Tubbo can tell – spending hours upon hours talking to Wilbur, playing Hypixel every so often with Techno, hanging out on Phil’s stream fairly constantly and doing his level best to make Phil as exasperated as possible. Tubbo’s glad. He’s so glad Tommy’s happy.

Something Tubbo hadn’t predicted, though, was- he’s having just as much fun. When Tommy invited him to SMP Earth, Tubbo didn’t know what to expect. He knew Tommy would do his best to include him, but he- he expected to be shunted to the side, like he had been the entirety of his prior life. Except-

That didn’t happen. He’s getting closer to Wilbur, Phil, and Techno, too.

Tubbo doesn’t quite know how it started, but he’s started being on Phil’s streams a *lot*. Phil indulges him – lets him play piano in the background and just chime into VC occasionally, or,

when he's in the mood, ramble about whatever's caught his attention that day. He's honestly on Phil's streams more often than Tommy is, and hangs out with him outside VC as well. Phil always has great advice, and when Tubbo's struggling with school or handling streaming, Phil will talk with him for hours and help him figure it out.

With Techno, Tubbo and him can talk for *hours* about mythology and random obscure topics. Tubbo's stayed up *far* too late talking to Techno, and he's pretty sure Techno's done the same. At least for Techno, he doesn't have to wake up for school in the next morning. Ugh.

Techno also helps Tubbo practice general Minecraft skills, because he honestly needs to get better at those. On stream and off, they play Hypixel together, and Tubbo's confidence grows, too.

He never could've dreamed he'd be calling fucking *Technoblade* one of his closest friends, yet, here he is.

And, with Wilbur-

Wilbur's started teaching Tubbo music.

It was something Tubbo always yearned for, back in the *before*. He saw Wilbur playing the guitar, and wished so desperately that Wilbur'd teach him something, and that Tubbo could maybe teach Wilbur something in return. And, now, Wilbur does.

He'll stay on call with Tubbo for hours, leading him through chords on his ukulele and singing songs with him while he plays the piano. They'll sing together. They'll play together. It always used to be just him and Tommy's thing, but he doesn't mind sharing this with Wilbur.

It's nice. It's really nice.

(It feels like home.)

Suddenly, it's April. And, suddenly, Tommy's been invited onto an MCC team – something that both of them have secretly been hoping for since the event started in November.

And- he's on a team with Wilbur, Phil, and Techno, and Tubbo's best friend is excited and nervous out of his *mind*.

-

"Ender- Tommy, calm down, will you?"

Tommy shoots Tubbo a glare, but acquiesces and takes a seat at his desk. He buries his head in his hands, and groans, "Tubbo, what if- what if I fuck up?"

"Then you fuck up," Tubbo answers, completely unhelpfully. Tommy glances up to shoot Tubbo a look. Tubbo rolls his eyes, and continues, "But, Tommy- be real, do you really think any of these three are gonna get super pissed at you if you mess up?" Tubbo levels Tommy with a deadpan look, and Tommy sags a little bit in his seat.

“...No,” he admits, and Tubbo sighs exasperatedly.

“Then *calm down*.”

“Fine, fine, I am. Jeez.”

They both fall silent. The event starts in a little less than half an hour – Wilbur, Phil, and Techno are all in call already. They’re undoubtedly waiting for Tommy to join, but Tommy can’t bring himself to join quite yet.

Ender, he’s *so nervous*.

Tubbo lets out another sigh. “Toms,” he says, softer. He leans forward in his seat. “You’ll be fine. You know how to play the game, and these three adore you. You’ll be fine.”

Tommy doesn’t respond, and Tubbo adds on, “We all believe in you.” Blinking rapidly, Tommy looks up. Tubbo, of course, looks entirely sincere.

He takes in a deep breath. Lets it out. “Okay,” he whispers. And then, stronger, “Okay.”

Tubbo gives him a grin. “Go and kill it, alright, Tommy?”

Mustering a grin of his own, Tommy responds, “Fuck yeah.” Quieter, “Thanks, Tubs.”

“Stop thanking me for being supportive. Get out of here.”

Despite his twisting nerves, Tommy laughs. Tubbo’s always had that effect. “Okay, okay,” Tommy says. And with that, he hangs up on Tubbo and joins the call.

“There he is!” Wilbur cheers, and Tommy’s grin turns slightly more sincere. His shoulders loosen slightly.

Logging into the MCC server, he exclaims, “You boys ready to win this?”

“Hell yeah,” Phil grins.

Techno chuckles, “Ready to become a ‘Sleepy Boi,’ Tommy?” Tommy grins thinking about it, even as his stomach churns in nervousness.

Earlier, when the teams were announced, Techno had declared that if they won the whole event, Tommy would become a member of the Sleepy Bois™. Tommy, had of course, accepted the challenge, with the stipulation that Tubbo be included as well. The three had agreed, though not without some fond mutterings about, “You two are *so* codependent.”

Tommy had grinned and not denied it. They are, but they have reason to be. He’s not about to be ashamed of that.

In the present, he responds, “Of course I am! I can already see the headlines – Sleepy Bois, now including Tommy Innit and Tubbo Underscore – win MCC.”

Wilbur barks out a laugh, the other two following soon after. “We’re not gonna get *headlines-*”

“We’re gonna be famous, Wilbur, famous!”

“We are *not-*”

“I can see our names on the billboards already-”

“I am begging you to *stop.*”

All of them are laughing, and Tommy grins.

This is gonna be a good MCC. He can feel it.

-

It is not a good MCC.

He- he doesn’t know what he’s done wrong. The early part of the competition had gone fine. It seemed like they meshed really well as a team, and Tommy was starting to get used to how MCC worked and how he should act during it. But-

Midway through Build Mart, Wilbur had started this- this *bit* about ignoring Tommy. The other two joined in immediately, and Tommy was left wondering what the fuck he did to piss them off. At first, he thought he was just muted. He checked discord, though; checked Wilbur’s stream and asked yet again if he was muted, and sure enough, there’s his voice.

Ender, he sounds so *small*.

“Wil- can you hear me?” he asks, once again. And, once again, Wilbur doesn’t respond, instead asking Phil about some materials they need.

All at once, tears burn in his eyes. This is- this is *just* like before. This is just like-

“Wil- Wilbur, please, you’re being insane.”

“Shush, Tommy. I’m thinking.”

“*This is* insane!”

No response.

“Wilbur? Wilbur, listen to me!”

No response, again.

Tommy tried, and tried, and tried to get Wilbur to listen. He never did.

Tommy rips himself back to the present, shaking himself and blinking back the tears. He can’t fucking *cry-* not when he’s live in front of thousands of viewers in the fucking

Minecraft Championship. He can't.

"...Techno? Can you get me some wood?"

Techno, also, ignores him. Tommy can hear him faintly muttering something under his breath, scoffing a bit. His stomach drops- and he-

"Techno, please! I never wanted this- You don't have to do this-"

Techno scoffs. "Yeah, sure you didn't," he mutters, turning his back on Tommy for what might be the final time. "Goodbye, Tommy," he calls over his shoulder.

In a last-ditch effort, he turns to Phil. "Phil, can you?"

"Oh my god, will you just shut up," Phil shouts, and-

"Tommy- shut up, okay? This is your fault!" Phil yells, withers rising around him.

"I-" Tommy can't even get words out before Phil's cutting him off.

"Just shut up," he scoffs, turning away.

Tommy can't do this.

"Sorry, chat, guys- gotta use the restroom," Tommy says, doing his best to grin. He knows he's not fooling anyone. He leaves the screen capture on, and just- bolts, as fast as he can.

He's not sure he's quick enough to slam the door before he lets out his first sob.

-

Tubbo doesn't think he's been this furious before in his *life*.

Those absolute *fuckers*. Tubbo trusted them, *Tommy* trusted them, then they go and pull *this* shit? Tommy has self-esteem issues- they *know* this. Tommy's not exactly subtle. Plus, they're all at least five years older than Tommy. And they're acting like fucking *five-year-olds*. Seriously? Acting like Tommy's muted? Ignoring him? Are they fucking *serious*?

It's when Phil yells at Tommy, and Tommy bites his lip, eyes shimmering with tears that Tubbo decides he's had fucking *enough*. "Sorry, chat, guys- gotta use the restroom," Tommy forces out.

The others don't even make a single comment.

Tubbo can barely hear a sob as the door slams shut behind him, and he tabs over to discord in the next instant.

He pulls up the group chat he has with the three others – ironically last used to plan Tommy's birthday celebration – and promptly starts spamming *HE'S CRYING YOU FUCKERS STOP BEING FUCKING DICKHEADS* as quickly as he can.

Tubbo estimates he's gotten to about thirty or forty spams when one of the fuckers finally notices. It's Philza, fittingly, who tabs over first, and Tubbo gets a sense of vindictive satisfaction when his face visibly drops.

He's silent and does his best to hide his reaction from chat, which- Tubbo can't blame him for, he guesses. But also, the three deserve to have chat rip them apart at this point. It's kind of already going that way, anyway – Tommy's chat spread quickly.

Instead of saying anything out loud, Philza whispers in-game to Wilbur and Technoblade, *check your dms*.

They both go quiet. Wilbur's the only reaction he can watch, but Tubbo can *see* the realization hit him, his eyes going wide and shoulders hunching up, guilty. Good. He should feel guilty.

While this is happening, Phil calls out casually, "Hey, Tommy, you need any materials?"

It's incredibly lucky for him that Tommy'd arrived back a couple seconds prior. His eyes are red. Tubbo's blood boils further. Tommy startles a little bit, but then answers hesitantly, "Uh, yeah, can you get some stone for me? And, does- does anyone have any birch wood?"

Phil immediately answers, "Yeah, sure thing," while Wilbur says, "There's some birch in the chest."

Techno's throwing the birch to him before Tommy can even move closer to the chest, and Tommy makes an aborted nod towards him. He doesn't respond to Wilbur and Phil.

Good. Tubbo can't blame him.

They may have stopped being assholes for the time being, but they are *far* from forgiven.

-

All of them, at some point immediately following when Tommy comes back from the bathroom, message him saying they're sorry.

Tommy doesn't respond.

They're nice for the rest of the event. They win MCC, Tommy (and Tubbo) both become Sleepy Bois, but it's one of the worst experiences Tommy's ever had.

-

Fuck, Wilbur is a fucking *asshole*.

It's all he can do to keep himself calm during the entirety of the rest of the Championship; all he can do to stop himself from pausing the whole entire event just to make sure Tommy's okay. He messages Tommy as soon as he gets Tubbo's message, but he's well aware it's not enough.

He can't imagine how much pain Tommy's in, having to stream while *crying*, of all things. God, how could he be so *stupid*?

Throughout the rest of the event, he makes sure to boost up Tommy as much as he can. Phil and Techno join him, Phil mentioning constantly how well Tommy's doing and Techno replacing most teasing comments with quiet compliments. Wilbur encourages Tommy the whole way through. He can only hope it helps, even a little bit.

In the end, they win. It's hard, acting happy and proud of himself at the end when Tommy fucking *cried* on stream and Wilbur's the furthest thing from proud of himself that he's been in a long, long time.

They all end their streams earlier than expected. Tommy leaves the call pretty much immediately. It's...silent, for a fair bit.

Phil's the first to speak. "We're all *dicks*," he says quietly, and Techno scoffs.

"You're tellin' me." He's quiet for a second. "The kid didn't deserve that."

Wilbur lets out a groan, burying his face in his hands. "We literally talked about him being nervous before this, too," he mutters. "We need to apologize, like- now."

He's leaving the call before he can hear the others' hums of agreement. Wilbur joins the call in the group chat the five of them have – as much as he'd like this apology to be private, Tubbo's the one who alerted them to their utter stupidity. And Tommy's honestly probably in call with Tubbo, anyway. He'd probably like to have Tubbo there.

Wilbur messages Tommy separately, saying, *hey, no pressure to join right away. join when you want, we'll be here. we need to apologize.*

After sending, there's nothing he can do but wait.

-

Not even five seconds after Tommy ends his stream, Tubbo's reaching for his phone and calling him. He leaves it audio-only; Tommy can decide if and when he turns his camera on. It feels like it takes *forever* for Tommy to pick up, even if it only takes a few seconds.

"Hey," Tommy whispers, quiet and so, so small. Tubbo's heart clenches.

"Hey, Toms," Tubbo says quietly. "How're you doing?" There's a hitched breath, and then Tommy's crying again without another word.

"Tubbo, I-" Tommy sobs, his cries growing muffled, as if he's covering his mouth. "I don't-know what I did *wrong*," he chokes out. Tubbo hushes him. Ender, he wishes he could be there. Tommy deserves a fucking hug right *fucking* now.

"You didn't do anything wrong," Tubbo reassures, doing his level best not to let the anger within him seep into his voice.

“I- I must’ve been too loud, or too annoying, or *something*-”

“No,” Tubbo shuts down, voice firm. “No, Tommy, they were just being total and complete *assholes*. You didn’t deserve that. I promise, you didn’t deserve that.”

Tommy takes in a shuddering breath. “Then-” Tommy snuffles, and *fuck*, Tubbo wants to *hug* him, “Then *why*?”

Tubbo’s quiet. “I dunno,” is all he can offer, and he winces as Tommy whimpers again. “They were being assholes. And they’d *better* fucking apologize, or I’m going to wring their scrawny necks.”

“They messaged me during,” Tommy whispers. “I didn’t answer.”

“Good,” Tubbo states. “It’s what they deserve.”

“Yeah.” Silence falls between them, for a second. Then:

“Tubbo, you couldn’t even reach their necks,” Tommy giggles. He turns on his camera, then; Tubbo pulls his phone away from his face to see Tommy brushing a couple of his tears away. Tubbo’s shoulders slump in relief, and he turns his on, too. He raises a challenging eyebrow at Tommy.

“You wanna bet?” He says, and Tommy actually laughs at that. It’s wet, but it’s real.

Tommy murmurs, “I’d bet on you against them any day.” Tubbo nods.

“Thank you.”

It’s at that instance when a *ding* sounds from Tommy’s end, and both their PCs start ringing. Tommy glances over to the side – where Tubbo knows his PC is. They must’ve sent him a message. “They want me to join the call.”

“I guess they want me too,” Tubbo mutters, mouse hovering over the group call. “They’re in our group chat.”

Tommy takes a moment to speak again. He’s still crying slightly. Tubbo’s heart *aches* for him. “Tubbo, I’m scared,” Tommy admits in a whisper, looking smaller and more vulnerable than he has in a long, long time. Since-

Taking in a deep breath, Tubbo shoves that memory away. No. He’s not thinking about- no.

Tubbo leans towards the camera. “If you want to, you can just ignore them,” Tubbo says. “But...” Tubbo sighs. This hurts to admit, but he continues, “As much as I’d love to kick all three of them in the balls right now- I’m sure they know that they fucked up, Tommy. They love you. They genuinely want to apologize, I’d imagine.”

Tommy breathes in deep, letting it out slowly. He wipes his eyes, and nods. “Okay,” he breathes out. “I’m not turning on my camera, though.”

“I am!” Tubbo says cheerfully. “I’ve wanted to glare at them all afternoon!”

Tommy snorts. “I love you, Tubbo,” he says, and a wave of affection hits Tubbo. Tubbo gives him a small smile.

“Love you too, Toms. See you in the call.”

With that, they both hang up, and join the main call.

-

When Tommy joins the call he doesn’t say a word, instead looking down at his keyboard and playing with the cable for his headphones. Wilbur’s and Phil’s cameras are on. Tubbo joins an instance after, and turns on his own camera, glare deeply creased into his face and not saying anything either. Tommy’s so lucky to have such a great best friend.

Thankfully, the others don’t leave them waiting for too long. Wilbur sighs; Tommy forces himself to keep looking down, but if he had to guess, he’d say Wilbur’s running a hand through his hair like he’s always done while stressed. “God, Tommy,” Wilbur says, and he sounds so achingly *sad*. Tommy’s heart pinches further. “Tommy, we’re- we are *so* sorry.”

Phil pipes in, quiet and subdued, “We were assholes, Tommy. You didn’t deserve that.”

“What they said,” Techno adds on, more sincere than Tommy’s ever heard him. He repeats, “You didn’t deserve that.”

Tommy gives himself a moment to take in a shuddering breath, letting it out slowly. “I- I appreciate it, guys,” he whispers. He hears Tubbo growl softly, and something in him wants to snort. He twists his fingers together, and continues even softer, “But...it *really* hurt, what you guys were doing.”

He finally looks up properly, and sees Wilbur leaning forward in his seat. He looks earnest. “Was there-” Wilbur swallows. “Was there anything in particular that *really* hurt you?”

Tommy scoffs, and, for some reason, that’s what makes his anger rise up, his *hurt* boil over and out of him.

“Jeez, I don’t know,” he says cuttingly. “Maybe it was you acting like you couldn’t hear me. Maybe it was the fact that you *ignored* me for almost an entire ten-minute-long game. Maybe it was the fact that you-” and at this, he looks at Phil’s image- “*Yelled* at me for asking a single question. Maybe it’s the fact that you made me doubt that you wanted me on the team.”

They’re all quiet. Tommy glances at Wilbur, and he looks devastated. “Maybe- just *maybe*- it was one of those things,” he finishes in a whisper, looking back down again.

One of them mutters, “*Fuck*,” under his breath. Tommy can’t be bothered to figure out who.

Finally, someone speaks up. “Tommy,” *Techno*, of all people, says, and Tommy can’t help but to look up.

He gasps as he realizes Techno's camera has been turned on.

"Tommy," he repeats, and he must be looking directly into his camera, because it feels like Tommy's looking him in the eyes. "Listen to me, and know that this is entirely sincere."

Techno waits for Tommy to nod before he continues. "Tommy, you're the one that allowed us to win today. Even after we all treated you like garbage during Build Mart, you still found it in you to encourage us. The whole time, you kept buildin' us up, and you clutched up durin' pretty much all the games."

Tommy blinks rapidly, and a few more tears trail down his cheeks as Techno leans in and says seriously, "Tommy, we would not have won without you. You won this MCC for us, not the opposite."

Phil takes the opportunity to pipe in, then. "Mate," he murmurs, and for some reason the tenderness in his voice makes Tommy want to cry even more. "Mate, you were *so* valuable today. You helped us so, so much, but even more- you were a ridiculously good teammate, Tommy. You always are. You're one of the most supportive people I know – always cheering everyone on and being genuinely happy when people do well."

Burying his face in his hands, Tommy scrunches his eyes closed, doing his level best not to start crying right there, right then. Phil, not taking mercy on Tommy, finishes with, "You're so *good*, Tommy, and I think I speak for all of us when I say that I was so incredibly excited to find out you were going to be on our team."

Tommy lets out a soft sob, and Wilbur, of course, decides it's his turn now. "Absolutely, I was excited when the teams came out," he says passionately, and Tommy can't help but adopt a faint smile. Wilbur takes a deep breath in, and says seriously, "Tommy- Toms, sweetheart." Tommy gasps at the pet name. He hasn't- Wilbur hasn't called him that since- since before the election.

"Sweetheart," he repeats softly, "I am so incredibly proud of you. You did so, so well today, and I'm so unbelievably sorry we did what we did. It was shitty, it was cruel, and we never should've done it in the first place. But- you handled it brilliantly, and there's no one I'd rather call my teammate."

Tommy snuffles, but looks up towards Wilbur. Wilbur adopts a small smile, then, as if he knows Tommy's looking, and he adds, "And there's no one else I'd rather call my little brother." He glances at Tubbo, something glinting in his eyes. "Brothers," he corrects, and Tommy's smile grows just a little more at that.

He takes a moment- breathes through his tears, and then turns on his camera.

All three of them smile a little more at the sight of Tommy's own smile. Phil murmurs, "There you are."

Tommy wipes at his eyes, sniffing, and mutters, "You guys still suck." But, then, he raises his eyes towards the camera and smiles shyly. "But...thank you. I really- I really appreciate it."

They all – even Techno – look at him with such softness, and- Tommy feels *loved*. As if they're reading his mind, Wilbur says softly, "Love you, Tommy."

Tommy buries his head in his hands. He can't handle this sheer, uncompromising *love*- it's fucking overwhelming when it comes from Tubbo alone, nevertheless all four of them. "I love you too," he says.

He glances up just in time to see Wilbur's eyes grow softer. Wilbur addresses Tubbo. "Thank you for kicking our asses into gear, Tubbo," Wilbur says seriously. "We needed that."

"I know you did," Tubbo says coolly. His arms are still crossed. Tommy's not sure he's moved from that position all this time. "I'm not forgiving you yet."

Techno shakes his head. "I wouldn't expect you to."

There's a pause, then Phil sighs. "Alright, well, I figure you two probably want to talk," he says, addressing Tubbo and Tommy. Tommy glances at Tubbo; he nods slightly. Obviously catching their exchange, Phil continues, "Then I'll head off. Goodnight, you guys. Tommy, great job again today."

"G'night," Techno chimes in as Phil leaves, before he also departs.

Wilbur lingers a little longer. "You did so good, Tommy," he reiterates. "I'm so proud of you."

Tommy whispers, "Thank you, Wilbur." A pause. "Love you."

Wilbur smiles warmly. "Love you, Tommy."

And he leaves. Without a word, Tommy hangs up, and facetimes Tubbo.

Tubbo picks up immediately, and Tommy just...presses a palm to his face. "Ender," he whispers. "Ender."

"Yeah," Tubbo echoes in the same tone. They're both silent, for a moment. Tubbo says quietly, "They really aren't the same, huh."

Tommy shakes his head. "Nope," he mutters. "Wilbur was never that- that *gentle*, and like hell Phil and Techno would be that emotionally vulnerable. Especially with *me*."

"Yeah." A beat, then Tubbo says softly, "They really love you."

Tommy shoots him a look. "Love *us*," he corrects. "But yeah. Yeah, they really do."

It's a crazy concept- Tommy and Tubbo, cast aside by everyone who loved them, once upon a time. They now have people who may not die for them – though Tommy honestly wouldn't be surprised if that was the case – but who will praise them, and help them grow, and *love* them. Even if they're annoying, even if they're obnoxious, or loud, or anything.

It's insane. It doesn't feel real.

“This is crazy,” Tommy breathes, and Tubbo lets out a faint laugh.

“Yeah,” he whispers. “Yeah, it really is.”

They fall into a comfortable silence. But, then, Tommy yawns, and Tubbo follows soon after. As one, they decide to sleep, whispering their goodnights and hanging up.

Tommy goes to sleep, and for once, he’s fully content.

-

After MCC, things are...better.

Nothing really changes much in terms of how they act around each other on-stream – Wilbur’s still an asshole sometimes, Phil’s supportive, Techno’s dry and sarcastic. Likewise, Tommy’s still a chaotic shit, Tubbo acts innocent but is in fact even more chaotic sometimes. The one difference, for Tommy and Tubbo, at least, is that they *finally* feel like they can learn trust the others fully.

Tommy can’t help but be a little wary around them for the first couple of days after – scared that they’ll gang up on him again. But, they never do. They’re kind to him, on and off stream, but especially off-stream. They’re incredibly supportive, and it doesn’t take long for Tommy to feel at ease around them again.

Tubbo doesn’t forgive them for a while. He acts normal on-stream, but off-stream, he’s just a little more quiet and aloof. Tommy can’t help but feel warm inside, knowing his best friend is still this protective of him.

The one thing that does change, though, is that the other three reach out *way* more than they used to. It’s like Tommy’s finally made his way into their actual circle; like he’s actually *friends* with all of them on a non-superficial level.

Wilbur constantly checks up on him, making sure he gets his homework done and isn’t overwhelmed with everything. Tubbo quietly confides in him that Wilbur does the same for him, too. Techno reaches out more, asking if they want to play with him; when they stay up too late or are woken up by nightmares, he’s always there to distract them.

And Phil- he does all of that and more.

He’s a mod in their chats. He’s almost *ridiculously* protective of them – checking in on them when they mention going out somewhere and banning absolutely anyone who even dares to insult them in their chats. He pays attention to their moods, and does his best to comfort them if they’re upset.

Tommy can actually start to feel that Phil’s becoming like a father figure to him- his biological father is great, but there’s something special about Phil, about Techno and Wilbur.

They may have said they loved him before, but now, Tommy feels like he actually *believes* it.

Tubbo admits quietly one night a month after MCC that he's starting to feel the same way. It was hard for Tommy to stop grinning after Tubbo said that. Because- well. Tubbo never admitted it, but Tommy was always faintly aware of him always feeling a little left out. Back in the before, Tommy always tried to include Tubbo. With all of them, but especially with Wilbur. It was hard, though, when Tommy wasn't really an equal part of the family, either.

Now, they're both part of the group. They're both cared for. They're both-

They're both loved.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for reading, and hope you all enjoyed!!! things really start kicking into high gear next chapter <3

courage

Chapter Summary

It's a normal day, a normal stream, when Tommy gets what must be the most terrifying DM of his life.

hey, says fucking Dream. you can join our server if you want.

Tommy can't breathe for a second. He just- stares, at it, for a long, long time, before he suddenly remembers, that *ah, right, he's streaming*. And Dream's probably *watching* said stream. Well, shit.

Chapter Notes

(make sure to check that you didn't miss chapter 6 - i uploaded two chapters today!)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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hey, says fucking Dream. you can join our server if you want.

Tommy can't breathe for a second. He just- stares, at it, for a long, long time, before he suddenly remembers, that *ah, right, he's streaming*. And Dream's probably *watching* said stream. Well, shit.

He forces himself to take in a deep breath – he's had to get good at that, recently – and laughs, “Ha- sorry guys, saw something that had me surprised for a bit.” Tommy watches his chat, deciding he'll think about the invite- think about it *later*- and laughs faintly, “No, you *cannot* know what it was. That is for big men to know and big men only.”

so do i get to know? Wilbur asks in chat, and this time the laugh Tommy lets out is real. “Sorry, Wilbur, but I'm afraid you're not enough of a big man to know about this.”

WilburSoot: *HEY*

WilburSoot: *TAKE IT BACK*

Tommy grins slightly, something loosening in his shoulders. Figures Wilbur would be able to make him feel better even *without* knowing anything about what's happening. “Can't take it

back when it's true," Tommy replies cheekily.

do i get to know? Phil chimes in, and Tommy sighs, entirely theatrically. "Yeah, I suppose you can know, Big Man Phil," he says.

WilburSoot: *HEY*

WilburSoot: *UNFAIR*

what about me? Techno adds, and this time Tommy can't help but laugh again, grin so large it feels like it's splitting his face. "Of course you get to know, Biggest of Men Tech-no-blade."

WilburSoot: *H E Y*

A ping sounds in Tommy's headphones right then. Tommy glances over, and rolls his eyes exasperatedly. "Looks like clingy-bo wants to join us," he jests to the camera, but presses *accept* anyway.

As soon as he accepts, Tubbo breaks in, "Tommy, if I *don't* get to know, I'm stealing one of your ribs."

Tommy lets out a bark of laughter, startled. "Why a rib?"

"Options," Tubbo answers simply. Tommy stares at the screen.

"Terrifying answer! Alrighty then!"

Tommy continues on with his stream, grin feeling firmly fixed on his face. The tight knot of anxiety in his stomach loosens up more and more as the stream goes on, and Tubbo stays, insulting Tommy and making somewhat-concerning jokes to keep Tommy smiling. It works.

When the stream ends, Tubbo stays in call, and another ping sounds. Tommy rolls his eyes when he sees Wilbur's DM, demanding he be allowed to join the call, and adds him. "Hello, child," Wilbur says. Tommy snickers at the exasperated tone in Wilbur's voice.

"Hello, not-big-man," Tommy replies cheekily, and Wilbur sighs.

"Gremlin child."

"I am not a *child!*"

"You are and forever will be."

"St-op!"

Wilbur laughs. The laughs taper off soon enough, though. Wilbur asks, sounding genuine, "What had you so shaken up, earlier?"

Tommy goes quiet, something heavy settling in his chest. Tubbo's silent, but he's there. It helps. "I got invited..." Tommy takes a deep breath in, and forces himself to continue, "I got

invited onto the Dream SMP.”

Tubbo inhales sharply. Wilbur says nothing but, “Oh?” Tommy can practically *see* the way Wilbur’s probably raising his eyebrows.

“I dunno what to do,” Tommy admits. He watches the little circles by their names, fiddling nervously with his fingers, and waits.

“Well, do you want to accept?” Wilbur asks, voice still nonchalant. “From what I’ve heard, Dream seems pretty chill – you’d probably have fun on that server.”

Tubbo interjects, voice carefully controlled, “You’ve met Dream?”

“Once or twice.” Neither of them respond, and Wilbur follows with, “What? You guys scared of him, or something?”

“Nope!” Tommy says, bright. Too bright. “Just wanted to know what you thought of him!”

Tommy can almost see Wilbur’s eyebrows raising. “Alright,” he acquiesces, sounding doubtful, still. “Well, I’ve gotta head off, but I’ll talk to you both later.”

“Alright,” they both reply.

Wilbur doesn’t leave quiet yet, though, and adds on, “But, Tommy- I do think this would be a good opportunity for you. To have some fun, y’know? Especially since SMP Earth ended a while ago.”

“Yeah,” Tommy responds, doing his best to hide the weakness in his voice. “Talk to you later, Wilbur.”

“...Talk to you later.” And he leaves.

Instantly, Tommy slumps further into his seat, and groans. “Ugh,” he says, which he thinks is an accurate summary of the situation.

Tubbo turns on his camera, and raises an eyebrow. “So,” he says.

“So.”

“You gonna do it?”

“I dunno.”

A pause. “Do you *want* to do it?” Tubbo ventures. Tommy buries his face in his hands, flicking on his own camera.

“I don’t know?” Tommy chews on his bottom lip, and says carefully, “My first reaction is *fuck no*, but...it would be a really good chance to figure out whether it *is* him, after all.”

“...You’re willing to risk it?” Tubbo asks quietly. When Tommy looks up, Tubbo’s gaze is cast down, hands fiddling with something.

Tubbo’s nervous for Tommy, he knows, and something inside him warms.

“I think I am. And...” Tommy trails off, wrapping his arms around his torso.

“And?” Tubbo prompts.

Tommy bites his lip harder. “...We still haven’t heard anything about Ranboo.”

A pause. “No. We haven’t,” Tubbo says lowly, carefully.

“Dream has more outreach than we do in the US and other parts of the world,” Tommy continues hesitantly. “Maybe...maybe this way we’ll be able to reach him?”

Tubbo’s quiet for a long moment. Tommy wishes he could know what was going through his mind. “...It’s possible, yeah.”

Tommy shrugs a bit. “Then I’d say it’s worth it, yeah.”

Tubbo sighs, and Tommy sees his shoulders slump. “Yeah. Yeah, okay.”

Tommy laughs a bit, then. “At least we know Dream’s in America!” He says as brightly as he can. “He can’t get here, even if it is him!”

Tubbo gives Tommy a deadpan look. “That’s a horrible excuse,” he says dryly. He sighs, after, and continues, “But alright, go for it.”

Tommy grins hesitantly, and Tubbo smiles back. “I’m sure it’ll be fine!” Tubbo encourages, and Tommy nods.

“Yeah, I’m sure it will.”

-

Surprisingly, it actually is fine.

Tommy joins the Dream SMP the next time he streams. He’s sure to reply to Dream beforehand, let him know he saw the message and isn’t just an impolite shit like he pretends to be on stream. Dream just replies with a thumbs-up emoji. Tommy can’t say he’s surprised, that’s a both a very Dream thing to do, and also Dream’s probably busy, too.

He’s honestly *very* exhausted when he decides to join. It’s not his best move, but hey, it’s definitely prime opportunity for some very funny moments. Tommy’s not sure if this is unfortunate or fortunate, because it also means he has almost zero filter, which leads to, well-

“Tommy, how have you pissed off everyone on this server *already* an hour into you being here?” Dream asks exasperatedly, his character staring at Tommy’s own. Tommy, surprisingly relaxed, just grins.

“That’s just my natural charm!” He says casually, hands linked behind his head. He can’t see Dream’s face, but he can only imagine that he looks incredibly unimpressed. That’s the typical reaction around Tommy, honestly.

Dream sighs, and says, “Well, looks like your *natural charm* is getting you exiled,” Dream says dryly. Tommy freezes, the word *exiled* echoing around in his head.

Exiled. Exiled again. Exiled like- like before.

Except- it’s *not* like before. Because Dream doesn’t sound actually angry, and Tommy’s only *actually* exiled for about ten minutes, and- it actually feels *teasing*. It doesn’t last for any time at all. Before he knows it, he’s back in the midst of everyone else, causing trouble again.

And when he logs off the server, he’s laughing.

Dream’s laughing, too, when stream ends, and it doesn’t feel threatening. “You’re wild, Tommy,” Dream says, and Tommy thinks he can imagine him grinning. “That was fun- see you tomorrow?”

“Yup, see you!” Dream leaves, still snickering a bit.

Huh. That actually went well.

Tubbo’s streaming at the moment, so Tommy just shoots him a text, letting him know how it went. After he leans back in his seat, and stares at the ceiling.

Huh.

Maybe he could come to like Dream in *this* reality, too.

-

Tubbo and Tommy, Dream decides, are *really* strange kids.

He invited Tommy to his server because- well, he looked like an interesting kid, and it seemed like he would be a good choice to spice up the server. And he certainly *did* do that, causing trouble and killing George within minutes of being on the server.

Tommy’d asked, a couple days after he’d joined, if Tubbo could join the server too, and Dream had agreed. He’d seen Tubbo on Tommy’s streams a few times, and they bounce off each other well, so why not?

Well, he definitely doesn’t regret it, but staring at the giant hole in the community house, Dream can’t help but sigh. “One rule,” Dream says, rubbing the bridge of his nose. “One rule, and that’s no grieving. Why?”

Tubbo’s streaming, so Dream’s able to glance over to see him grin sheepishly as Tommy laughs. “We were testing explosions, and this one came a little too close?” Tubbo asks more than explains, and Dream just shakes his head.

“Just fix it, and you’re all good,” he tells them, before he walks away. He leaves the call as Tubbo starts whispering something – he doesn’t hear, but really, how is whispering in a voice call going to help? He’d be able to hear it anyway if he’d stayed.

Seriously, they’re some *strange* kids.

Still, their chaos is entertaining. Who knows, maybe adding them will end up being one of the best decisions he’s ever made.

-

“So, test number one complete,” Tubbo states, scratching something down in his notebook. Honestly, he mostly has the notebook for show at this point, but it’s funny seeing Tommy’s reactions as he writes down things at increasingly weird moments, so he keeps it for now. Predictably, Tommy snickers a bit as he scribbles.

“Seriously, you and your notebook,” Tommy teases. Tubbo just shrugs at him, grinning slightly.

“Never know when you might need to know exactly what someone said!” He says cheerfully.

Tommy chuckles. “I guess so,” he says amusedly. His tone grows more serious, then, and he says, “So, his reaction was pretty calm for us blowing up the Community House. Or a version of it, at least.”

“Yeah,” Tubbo frowns, something twisting in his chest. He never likes thinking about that day- any day in that timespan, really. It kinda freaks him out, a little bit, that there’s an almost-perfect replica of it in this world.

He’s not thinking about it.

Tubbo continues, “He didn’t freak out at all.”

“A good sign. Hopefully it sticks?” Tommy says hopefully, and Tubbo nods.

“Hopefully!”

Tommy brightens, then, and says, “Oh- not to change the topic completely, but look what I found earlier!”

Tubbo sighs, but a fond smile is curving at his lips. “What did you find, Tommy?”

“*Look!*”

Tubbo tabs over, and his eyes alight. He laughs. “Did you find your disks in this world, too?”

Tommy’s made a habit of, whenever he makes a new world, spending however long it takes to find as many versions of Cat and Mellohi that he can. He’s died...many times, in new worlds, doing this. He still does it, though. Tubbo can’t say he’s surprised.

Tommy nods, grinning. “Yup!” He brandishes the disks both of his hands, and says proudly, “Found them both. And it only took me a few hours!”

“Nice, nice.” Tubbo pauses for a moment. “What do you think of everyone else?”

Tommy shrugs. “They all seem fine. I haven’t really tested everyone’s boundaries yet, but- they do seem different.”

“Yeah,” Tubbo agrees, slumping back in his chair and grinning. He’s tired, but it has been a fun day. “We can’t know for sure, of course, but I agree.” Tommy grins back.

Even with their worries, the Dream SMP seems like it could end up being a good time, after all.

-

The first sign Tubbo gets that something isn’t quite right is when Dream tries to steal Tommy’s disks for the third time. The first time, it was funny. The second time, Tubbo could tell it started actually getting on Tommy’s nerves, and he started fighting back harder and enlisted Tubbo as well. And, the third time-

The third time, it started feeling awfully, terrifyingly familiar.

It’s been around two decades since this happened the first time, so Tubbo didn’t really recognize it at first other than having some vague sense of familiarity. It’s Dream and Tommy fighting, though, so of course it’d feel familiar. He just brushed it off.

But, after Dream steals the disks *again* – while destroying the floor of Tommy’s base, which Tubbo will agree is actually really funny – Tubbo starts to think that something’s not right.

This is *too* familiar. Too similar. Too- too *real*, almost.

The slight tightness to Tommy’s smile betrays he’s feeling the same way.

As the stream continues, the sense that things *aren’t right* just continue to grow. When Wilbur joins the call, and has a frankly *really weird* conversation with Dream through Tommy, it doesn’t feel familiar. But when Tommy and Tubbo fight back against Dream for what must be the fifth time, it does.

Something cold sinks in Tubbo’s chest. *It’s just a coincidence*, Tubbo tells himself. It’s just a coincidence, it’s just a happenstance, it doesn’t mean anything. Just because the same exact conflict is happening with the same exact people, except through a *block game* this time, it doesn’t mean anything.

Tubbo’s never been good at lying to himself.

After stream, Tubbo calls Tommy. “Tommy-”

“Tubbo-” Tommy says at the exact same time. A pause.

“You recognized it too, then?” Tubbo asks, sure to keep his voice calm. No need to freak Tommy out even more than he probably already is.

Tommy says loudly, “Of fucking *course* I recognized it, Tubbo! This is-” Tommy lets out a groan. Tubbo relates.

“This is *so weird*,” Tubbo says, hushed.

Tommy mumbles, “You’re telling me.” A pause. Then, “What do we even do?”

“I...” Tubbo sighs, closing his eyes. He feels tired. “I dunno.”

“It’s so *similar*,” Tommy says, hushed.

“Yeah.”

“This explains the Community house, and- fuck, I re-built the Prime Path as a *joke!*”

“Damn. Yeah, it’s a little too fitting, huh.”

Tommy *droops*, his head hanging. “...I guess we just gotta keep going.”

“...Yeah.”

They’re quiet for a long, long moment. “Well!” Tommy breaks in, bright. “At least now we get to kick Dream’s ass again!”

Tubbo laughs, shoulders relaxing slightly. Of course Tommy figures out a way to make him feel better. “Tommy, we never really kicked Dream’s ass.”

“Tubbo, stop ruining my moment!” Tommy continues in the same bright tone.

Tubbo hums, as if thinking, before replying, “Nope!”

“You suck. You are the worst best friend.”

“You love me.”

“I hate you actually. Die.”

“No can do, sorry, return in 5-7 business days to try again.”

“Tubbo, what the fuck?”

-

The similarities don’t stop piling up.

The fight with Dream is one thing. But- Tubbo suddenly notices so many things about the server that, when put in context, are almost disturbingly similar. The Dream SMP proper.

Tommy's house. Ponk's lemon tree. The *bench*- which Tommy and Tubbo recreate in almost every server they're in, but has boatloads more significance now.

Ender, how had they not *noticed*?

The real kicker is when Wilbur joins the server. He'd joined a few weeks prior, just for a day, but it was a joke. He was just goofing around for a day, and left admitting he probably would never be back. Well, now he's back, and-

"Tommy, I want to make a drug van with you!"

Tubbo hears that as he joins the call, and blinks. He can hear Tommy splutter on the other end, and he says, "Excuse me?"

"I wanna make a drug van!" Wilbur repeats, bright, as if that helps clear *anything* up.

Tubbo chimes in, because he can hear Tommy short-circuiting even from miles away, "Why do you wanna make a drug van, Wilbur?"

"It'd be fun!" Wilbur says. "What, you don't wanna fuck around a little bit? That's not like you two."

Before Tubbo can say anything, Tommy says, "Of course we'll help, Wil!" His voice is far too high pitched. Tubbo can't blame him, his heart is pumping *way* too quickly right now.

Tubbo adds on, because he's still processing, "Why a *drug* van, of all things?"

"Why not?" Wilbur answers promptly, and Tubbo really can't argue with that, can he.

"Fair enough," he says calmly. He mutes, for a moment, and grabs a pillow. He screams into it. It doesn't help him feel much better.

"Okay," he mutters, unmuting and joining Wilbur and Tommy in building a drug van. Okay.

They're doing this.

-

The rest of the first stream isn't too bad, much to Tommy's relief. The memories from- from back when it all began are blurred, and though it's all familiar, it's removed enough that Tommy doesn't feel too panicked.

He has no fucking clue where the idea of a *drug van* came from, though. Like, how did Wilbur come up with that? And why?

Well, the why can be answered by Wilbur being fucking insane, but that's beside the point.

What *isn't* beside the point, is that by the end of the stream, they've got a wall built around their drug van, and Wilbur's pitching country names. "I just think we need to declare our independence from those stupid Americans," Wilbur says casually, character facing

Tommy's. Earlier, Dream and the others had tried to stop their "drug" business (it was really potions, which is again *far* too similar) and they'd had to fight back.

"We need a country name," Wilbur decides, ten seconds later, and before he can stop himself Tommy's already speaking.

"L'Manberg," Tommy says quietly. He just barely hears a shaky inhale from Tubbo's end, before it suddenly goes quiet. He wishes he could do the same.

Wilbur hums consideringly. "Huh, that's actually good." A pause. "Alright, here lies our country: L'Manberg!" Wilbur decides. Tommy takes a moment to breathe through the emotion that slams him at the sentence. Wilbur snickers, all of a sudden, and whispers, "Tommy."

"Yes, Wilbur?"

"Tommy, this is just like Hamilton."

Tommy blinks for a second, then snorts. Wilbur's not wrong. "It really is, huh?" He says amusedly.

"It *is*!" Wilbur states more excitedly. "Oh! We need a declaration of independence!"

And Tommy's back to being emotional. "We do, don't we?" Tommy murmurs, because this is how the story goes, doesn't it. They build the van, they build the walls, they write the declaration, the SMP declares war. And then it gets real.

Tommy sighs, shoulders feeling weighted down. "Well, let's write this thing, then," he says, trying and failing to sound excited.

And they do, and it's the exact same. And-

Tommy can't help but wonder just *what* he and Tubbo have gotten themselves into.

-

The next stream is...a whirlwind, to say the least.

Tubbo logs onto his PC, and suddenly, everything seems to kick into high gear. Wilbur and Tommy had enlisted him before the stream to help them write a Declaration of Independence (Independence, actually), which- wow. Then, they logged on, and-

Everything happens so *fast*.

Tubbo remembers the war. He remembers when they'd first discovered the forest burning around them, the smoke and fear both choking them. He remembers when Dream had declared war the first time the very next day, and how *angry* he'd been. He remembers the days turning into weeks, the weeks turning into months, of fighting and desperation and misery.

He remembers Tommy being turned into a commander too young. He remembers Fundy crying after dark. He remembers Wilbur's shoulders turning slumped. He remembers himself having nightmares *constantly*.

He remembers Eret's unwavering steadiness turning into betrayal at the blink of an eye.

Now, the events- they're (mostly) the same. Tommy still gets shot down by George towards the beginning, although this time, he just dies, instead of having to deal with an arrow wound through the shoulder for the rest of the month. However, Tubbo knows for a fact that they were not joking around the first time around- now, Wilbur and Tommy are making *Hamilton* references even as they're fighting for their lives. It's strangely lighthearted, even though they're acting out one of the worst periods of Tubbo's life.

They still fight battles. There's only a couple of them, though, and they seem to go in L'Manberg's favor, which is- not how Tubbo remembers things, for the most part. The first time, there were a few battles that L'Manberg ended up winning, but their resources started running low awfully quick, and things started going downhill from there.

Here, the only two battles they play out actually go in their favor. It's- definitely different. What was at *least* a couple of months in Tubbo's memories plays out in less than an hour – what once sent Tubbo's heart absolutely *racing* now just makes him a little nervous. It's nice, not to have to relive *all* the terror, at least.

Still, Tubbo could definitely do without what's about to happen.

"I've got a secret weapon, of sorts," Eret says casually, leading them towards a mountain. Tubbo's palms are sweaty against his mouse. It takes all he has to not start visibly trembling on-stream; he's not sure how well he manages.

Similarly, there's a small, barely audible shaky exhale from Tommy's end. If Tubbo wasn't looking for it, he's not sure he would've heard it. No one seems to react. Good.

Part of him had hoped that this wasn't going to happen again, no matter how well things have lined up so far. Eret hadn't brought up *anything* to them about being a traitor. Though this has been as unconventional a roleplay session as anything Tubbo's ever done, he'd still hoped that the lack of communication meant that it wasn't going to happen. Guess not.

They follow Eret (just like last time). They're joking and laughing (not like last time). They're expressing relief (just like last time).

They trust Eret – *exactly* like last time.

Tommy's the one to press the button, this time. Tubbo doesn't know if it was just to get it over with, or what was going through his mind, but before Tubbo can react, he's being attacked. He's killed within seconds.

It's surprisingly quick.

“Down with the revolution, boys,” Tubbo barely hears over the way the blood’s rushing past his ears. “It was never meant to be.”

It was never meant to be.

Tubbo- in his past life, he never actually heard the saying. He was killed before Eret uttered the words during the *before*; he wasn’t there when Wilbur was killed. The only reason he knows at all the significance is Wilbur’s whispered, haunted gasps after they’d all woken up together in the Caravan; is Phil’s cold, detached summary of just how Wilbur blew up the country and died.

Hearing it now sends ice into his veins.

But, still, he has to keep going. He forces himself to act normal, to not act totally terrified, to act like the boy he’s always been on stream. He shoves his panic down deep, refuses to let it affect him, and keeps on going.

He doesn’t expect to have to watch L’Manberg blow up and Tommy die that very same stream.

All he can do is watch as they regroup, and Wilbur goes for negotiations, and Dream blows L’Manberg up, and Tommy challenges Dream. He goes along with everything- active, but detached.

He swallows down a strangled gasp as Tommy gets killed by Dream. He’s not sure how good a job he does at hiding it. Surreptitiously, he opens a tab and opens Tommy’s stream, and breathes out a sigh of relief when Tommy at least *looks* okay. Tommy could be hiding his emotion, Tubbo knows, but- he doesn’t look actively hurt, at least.

Tubbo’s glad.

Finally, *finally*, the stream ends. They win independence. Tommy gives up his disks. L’Manberg is free, Wilbur’s happy. All things Tubbo knew were going to happen. It’s weird as *fuck*, knowing how all of this goes down, knowing that this is Tubbo’s *life* being played out, but- he can’t deny it anymore. He can’t pretend that it’s just some coincidence that this is happening.

His life is somehow a fucking *story*. It makes absolutely no sense, but that’s the only explanation.

Tubbo lets out a bit of a hysterical laugh, leaning his head back and staring at the ceiling.

What the *fuck* is his life?

-

“So, our life’s now Minecraft roleplay, huh.”

Tommy’s voice comes out flat, which honestly is a pretty fair representation of how he feels. He’s *so* overwhelmingly done with this day- he had to roleplay two of his fucking deaths. To

be fair, they weren't even close to causing the amount of pain that he experienced the first time he experienced them, but to be fair to him, he also had to roleplay his *deaths*.

While making Hamilton references.

What is his *life*?

Tubbo sighs, sounding as tired as he does. "Yeah," he says. "Yeah, apparently it is."

Tommy raises his head and stares at Tubbo. "What are we even supposed to do?"

"Fuck if I know." Tubbo sighs, resting his head on his arms. "Who knows, this might be a one-time happenstance. It did wrap up pretty cleanly."

"Yeah, but the popularity it got was *wild*." Seriously, Tommy's stream has never had that many people watching it. "I wouldn't be surprised if Wil, at least, wants to do something like that again."

Tubbo lets out a breath. "Yeah, you're right." A pause, then a hesitant, "We *could* leave, you know. We don't have to do this- they wouldn't blame us."

Tommy lets himself think about that for a moment – he really, *really* didn't enjoy acting out his own deaths. He doesn't like the idea of having to act out anything else, either. But...

"The popularity it got was really, *really* high," he says quietly. "I- I know that we're popular as we are, but..."

"This might be more likely to reach Ranboo, you think," Tubbo finishes in a whisper. Tommy nods slightly, head drooping.

"Yeah."

It's been over two years, now, since Tommy and Tubbo reunited, and they've heard *nothing* about their best friend. Tommy isn't about to lose hope, and if this could *possibly* help them find him, he has to do it.

Dammit, he wants his other best friend back. He *misses* him. He misses his stupid puns, he misses his laugh, he misses the way he'd come up behind Tommy and peer over his shoulder, casually letting Tommy lean against him. He misses his hugs. He misses the way Ranboo *loved*, so, so easily.

He misses him.

Tubbo sighs, sad and downtrodden. "We're gonna stick with this, then," Tubbo decides lowly. Tommy nods.

"Yeah, we are." Tommy lets out a frustrated breath, then, and shoves his face into his hands. "How did this even *happen*?! This- this is our *life*."

Tubbo shakes his head. "I dunno, man. It's weird."

“It’s fuckin’ insane, you mean,” Tommy corrects, leaning back and running a hand through his hair. “Like- some things are correct, others are off, and some are just *weird*. Like- how the fuck?”

“Honestly, at this point, I think the only choice we have is to just roll with it.” Tubbo hesitates, then adds, “It...does make me more cautious of the others, but- there are also some things that are so *different*.”

“Yeah, and why would they just suddenly decide to roleplay our lives?” Tommy shakes his head frustratedly. “It doesn’t make sense.”

“No, it doesn’t.” Tubbo gives Tommy a wry grin. “Guess we’ve got no choice but to live with it.”

Tommy lets his shoulders slump. “Yeah. Yeah, you’re right.”

The silence between them hangs heavy. Tommy bows his head, but then Tubbo speaks up.

“...Hey, wanna play some smash?”

“You fuckin’ *bet* I do.” Tommy’s shoulders loosen, and when Tubbo grins at him, he smiles back.

-

The next few days are surprisingly...normal.

No more weird roleplay streams happen. All the time they spend on the server is just joking around. Tommy builds more of the Prime Path, which- it’s *weird*, seeing all these structures that were once real and normal looking all blocky and Minecraft-y.

They get to know the others even more, too – Fundy is just as funny and fun to talk to as they expected, and is notably *not* a fox person. Niki Nihachu joins the server fairly quickly after the war, and she’s one of the *nicest* people Tommy’s ever met. She always was kind, before everything, but she’s a *sweetheart* in this life. Tommy can see why Wilbur’s always hanging out with her.

Speaking of Wilbur- the day after the war, Tommy learns of...*something* that Wilbur’s a part of, and wasn’t planning on telling Tommy about.

Namely, he, Phil, Niki, Fundy, and who knows who else are all meeting up in Brighton, and they *weren’t* going to invite Tommy.

And this simply is *not* allowed to stand.

-

“Wil, *please*? Please, please, please, please, please-”

Wilbur sighs, still typing away at something that can't be as important as Tommy is, "For the last time, Tommy, you can't come."

"But *Wil-*"

"Tommy." Tommy shuts his mouth as Wilbur shifts his full attention towards Tommy. His eyes soften a little when they fall on Tommy – he's well aware that he's pouting – "Tommy, you can't come and hang out with people up to sixteen years older than you."

"I don't *care!*" Tommy says passionately. Wilbur shakes his head.

"It doesn't matter what you think, it matters what your parents will think."

Tommy argues back, "They'd be fine with it!" He doesn't actually know that, but he has to believe they would be.

Wilbur, Phil, Fundy, Niki- *so many* people that Tommy's met (in this life) and grown to care about and love – they're all meeting up. As soon as Tommy had found out about it, he'd started asking Wilbur if he could go, too. Wilbur said no. He kept asking, dragging Tubbo into it as well. Wilbur kept saying no.

And, intellectually, he kind of gets why Wilbur doesn't want him to come. The age gaps *are* large, but- Tommy doesn't give a *single* fuck about that. So what if his family-figures are much older than him? He still wants to meet them.

(He still wants to finally, *finally* get a hug from his big brother in this life.)

Interrupting Tommy's thoughts, Wilbur says gently, "Tommy, you can't know that."

Tommy puffs up. "I can ask!"

"Tommy-" Wilbur cuts himself off, a long-suffering look on his face. He closes his eyes for a moment, obviously thinking. Tommy twists his hands in his lap. "Okay. Okay." Tommy perks up as Wilbur opens his eyes, and says, "If- and *only* if- you can get one of your parents to come down to Brighton with you, then you can come down."

Pumping a hand in the air, Tommy shouts, "*Fuck* yeah!" Wilbur sighs again, but he's got a small smile on his face. Tommy knows he's not actually annoyed.

"Tell Tubbo about it, too," Wilbur adds, and Tommy shoots him a grin, text thread open with Tubbo.

"Already on it, bitch!"

He can't seem to stop smiling the entirety of the call, grinning even wider when Tubbo replies back with an excited *hell yeah!!!* He's *finally* going to meet Wilbur and Phil- finally gonna hear their voices in person-

And he's *finally* going to be able to get his hug.

Chapter End Notes

thank you so much for reading, see you next time <3

(and no, this isn't gonna be a regular occurrence lmao, i just wanted to surprise yall :D)

joy

Chapter Summary

“*Wilbur!*”

Wilbur looks up at Tommy’s call, and man, it’s a lot different seeing that fond smile form in real life than on camera. Tubbo hasn’t seen that smile in...eighteen years? Maybe longer? Damn.

“Tommy! Tubbo!” Tommy comes to a stop in front of Wilbur, hands fidgeting. Tubbo rolls his eyes- it’s so *obvious* that he wants to hug Wilbur, but isn’t willing to initiate it. Wilbur doesn’t seem to notice, though, just standing there and grinning. His posture is relaxed, hands tucked into his pockets.

Tubbo waves, “Hi, Wilbur.”

Chapter Notes

meetup meetup meetup

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Tubbo!”

Tubbo laughs, catching his best friend as he launches himself at Tubbo. “Tommy!” He echoes back. Tommy clings onto him, arms wrapped tight around Tubbo’s shoulders, and Tubbo links his arms just as tightly around Tommy’s waist. “Hi!”

Tommy leans back a bit, and meets Tubbo’s eyes. “Hey!” He says, grinning. Tommy yanks Tubbo back into a hug quickly enough, and he just goes with it.

As much as they’d promised each other they’d meet up somewhat regularly after that first time they met in real life, they hadn’t really been able to. Tommy’s schoolwork started swamping him, and Tubbo wasn’t much better. Tommy’s parents kept a much closer eye on him, plus, well- now that they knew they were both alive, there wasn’t an undying *need* to go see each other.

Even if it felt like it sometimes.

Then, COVID hit, and they were even less able to even leave the house, nevertheless travel a few hours to see each other. Thankfully for their sanity, they were able to spend hours upon

hours with each other online, then, making videos and streaming together. Quite honestly, some of those days are the best days of Tubbo's life.

Still, nothing could compare to Tubbo actually being in Tommy's arms, and being able to hug him close again.

Tommy's still just as warm.

Tubbo's the first to pull back, giving Tommy a smile. "C'mon," he says, tugging at his best friend's hand. It's reminiscent of the very first time they saw each other again, and Tubbo can't help but grin. "Let's go back to my place and break the internet."

Tommy laughs, throwing his head back and everything. "Let's," he says, and lets himself be dragged along.

-

They don't end up streaming right away, when they get to Tubbo's. He's not entirely surprised – as much as they're streamers, they're best friends first. Tubbo hasn't seen Tommy in almost a year; forgive him if he wants to spend time off camera with Tommy.

"Ha! Take *that*, bitch!"

Never mind, Tubbo's going to throw him into a flaming pit. Full of knives. With snakes.

"You *fucker*," Tubbo spits, dragging his car back onto the road and rocketing after Tommy. Tommy laughs tauntingly from his first-place position.

He says, "Not *my* fault you suck at Mario Kart," and damn if Tubbo doesn't want to smack that smug smirk *right* off of Tommy's face.

At that very moment, he gets a blue shell, and an evil grin comes across his face. Tommy's not looking at him, but he must see the blue shell on the screen, and instantly his smile drops.

"Oh, no- no, Tubbo, don't-" he whines, and Tubbo just laughs.

"Fuck you, you drove me off of the road. This is your just reward." He lets the blue shell fly, and laughs as he passes Tommy.

"*Fuck*- now I'm in *fourth*, Tubbo! This is so rude of you!"

"Not *my* fault you suck at Mario Kart!" Tubbo throws back. Tommy punches him in the arm.

"You're a fucker."

"Takes one to know one!"

"You *bitch*-" Tommy actually throws his controller aside, at that moment, and tackles Tubbo into the floor.

Let's just say that particular game of Mario Kart doesn't get finished, and quite a few items get knocked off of shelves.

-

"I can't believe you punched me," Tubbo grumbles, rubbing at his sore jaw. Tommy just snickers, feeling absolutely no remorse. Tubbo should've realized what was coming.

He responds, "You were being a bitch! You deserved it."

"You were a dick to *me* first!"

"Well, when *I* do it, it's fine. When *you* do it, it's not okay."

Tubbo just sighs, taking a seat next to Tommy. "You're impossible," he tells Tommy. Tommy just grins.

"I'll take that as a compliment!"

Not letting Tubbo get another word in, Tommy starts the stream. "What is *up*, chat?" He shouts.

Instantly, everyone's yelling about Tommy and Tubbo being together, and Tommy laughs. "Yup, I'm with this dumbass," he says, gesturing towards Tubbo. Tubbo sighs dramatically.

"He broke into my house and wouldn't leave," he informs the camera.

Tommy brushes off, "Don't let him fool you, chat, he begged me to come over until I did."

"I did *not*!"

"Did too- I *heard* it!"

"You're an idiot."

"*You're* an idiot!"

The stream- pretty much continues on like that the whole time. Their dynamic is even more wild in person; Tommy's pretty sure this is the most unhinged chat has ever seen either of them.

It's also the most fun stream Tommy thinks he's ever had.

-

"So, we're seeing Wilbur tomorrow, huh."

Tommy smiles, bright and full of excitement. "Yeah!" He exclaims. "It's gonna be great!" Tubbo bows his head, playing with the hem of his shirt. Tommy's smile dims a bit. "What, you not excited?"

Tubbo's head jerks up, shaking wildly. "No, I'm excited! I'm just..." He worries his bottom lip between his teeth, and admits, "Just a little nervous, that's all."

Wrapping an arm around Tubbo, Tommy confides, "I am too." Tubbo peers up at him through his bangs.

"You are?"

"Well, duh," Tommy scoffs. "It's a little intimidating, innit? Meeting up with all these people at once."

Tubbo leans into Tommy. "Yeah," he says quietly. "It is."

"But!" Tommy says cheerfully, "They love us, we love them, it'll be fine."

He glances down to see a small grin form on Tubbo's face. "Yeah, it will be."

-

And it is.

-

"*Wilbur!*"

Wilbur looks up at Tommy's call, and man, it's a lot different seeing that fond smile form in real life than on camera. Tubbo hasn't seen that smile in...eighteen years? Maybe longer? Damn.

"Tommy! Tubbo!" Tommy comes to a stop in front of Wilbur, hands fidgeting. Tubbo rolls his eyes- it's so *obvious* that he wants to hug Wilbur, but isn't willing to initiate it. Wilbur doesn't seem to notice, though, just standing there and grinning. His posture is relaxed, hands tucked into his pockets.

Tubbo waves, "Hi, Wilbur."

At the same instant, Tommy asks, "How're you, man? How was the travel? Wait- you live here, never mind."

Wilbur chuckles, and just says, "I'm doing fine, Tommy." He opens his arms a bit, and Tommy *visibly* perks up. It's hard for Tubbo not to laugh. "You're far too readable- you can have a hug if you want one, Tommy."

It only takes a second of hesitation before Tommy's plowing into Wilbur, hugging him as tightly as he can. Wilbur looks a little confused at the force of the hug, at the way Tommy tucks his head into Wilbur's chest, but most of that melts into fondness as he wraps his arms around Tommy.

"See? That wasn't so hard," he teases softly into Tommy's hair, and Tubbo's hit with a sudden pang of longing.

Tommy mutters *shut up* into Wilbur's chest, but just hangs on tighter. The hug lasts for only a few seconds more, Tommy pulling back first and grinning up at Wilbur. Tubbo knows, though, that Tommy'd be happy staying there all day.

What Tubbo doesn't expect is for Wilbur to turn towards Tubbo as soon as Tommy lets go and open up his arms again. "C'mere, Tubbo," he urges, and the longing fades into disbelief, then warmth.

He always forgets that they care about him like they do Tommy, too.

He slowly steps up into Wilbur's arms, careful, as if he'll change his mind last-second. Intellectually, he knows that Wilbur would never do that, but- he's wanted this for so *long*. And...well, almost everything that's been kind to Tubbo has been ripped away eventually.

Wilbur's not ripped away, though. He wraps his arms around Wilbur's waist and Wilbur's own come around Tubbo's back, warm and secure. He's a good hugger, Tubbo notes, laying his head against Wilbur's chest. Not as good as Tommy, of course, but still good.

He forces himself to let go after only a few seconds, not wanting it to become weird. The fond, affectionate smile Wilbur meets him with after he lets go, though, is almost too much to bear. "Well?" Wilbur asks. "Ready to meet the others?"

Tommy and Tubbo share a look, then in unison, say, "Yup!"

-

Phil's a *really* good hugger, Tommy decides.

The moment they'd rounded the corner and Phil had caught sight of them, a broad grin had come across his face. He'd opened his arms for Tommy as soon as he'd gotten within reasonable distance, and this time, there's no hesitation before Tommy's launching himself into Phil's arms. "Heya, mate," Phil greets, and Tommy hides his smile against Phil's shoulder.

"Hi, Phil," he murmurs. Phil laughs. He feels safe.

After a few more seconds, he pulls back, a little mournful at not being able to hug Phil forever. Man, how are all of his friends so good at hugging? Phil meets him with a smile, squeezing his shoulders and looking him up and down.

"You're too tall," Phil says, and Tommy snickers.

"Not my fault you're a shortie," Tommy teases back. Phil levels a joking glare at him.

"I could just make you go home," he threatens. Tommy rears back and gasps as if being struck, but he knows Phil's joking. It's so nice being able to *know* that, now.

He says in dismay, "You *wouldn't!*"

Phil laughs. "Nah, I wouldn't, kid."

Tommy grins, and Phil shoves him gently off to the side. “Go say hi to the others,” he encourages. Tommy turns away as he’s beckoning Tubbo closer, saying, “C’mere, Tubbo, your turn.” Tubbo’s eyes light up, and he and Tommy share a grin as Tubbo leaves Niki’s arms to go to Phil.

“Hey, Tommy!” Niki greets, bright grin on her face. Fundy waves, looking tired, but still making the effort to smile at him. Tommy can’t help but let his own smile brighten in response.

He hasn’t known Niki for all that long, but she’s been nothing but kind to him so far. And Fundy’s really fun to talk to, too. Tommy can’t wait to get to know the both of them better.

“Hey, guys!” He responds. “How were your flights?”

Niki sighs a little. “Tiring,” she admits, “But not too bad.” Fundy grumbles a bit but nods.

“Yeah, same here.” Niki goes in for the hug, then, and Tommy stiffens a little before relaxing into it. He hadn’t really expected her to *want* to hug, it’s not like they’ve known each other for that long, but she evidently does. She’s warm.

She reminds him of- of the Niki from *before*.

He blinks back a few tears, and hugs her a little tighter.

Once they pull back, Fundy gives Tommy another wave. “I’ll pass on the hug, but it’s nice to meet you IRL, dude.”

Tommy laughs, waving back. “Same to you,” he grins.

“Alright!” Wilbur claps, gaining all of their attention. He smiles. “Let’s go get some food, shall we?”

-

“Tommy, Tubbo, stop playing footsie under the table, I swear to god.”

Tommy stifles a snicker, but desists. Tubbo gives Phil a sheepish smile; Tommy doesn’t even try at being apologetic. “Sorry, Phil,” they both chorus. Phil just shakes his head.

“Chaotic little shits,” he mutters under his breath, before he goes back to his conversation with Fundy and Niki. Tommy and Tubbo lock eyes for a moment before they break down into snickers. Ender, it’s so fun being the annoying little sibling. Tommy missed it.

He’s about to reach out with his foot to kick Tubbo again when Wilbur says, without even looking, “Don’t even think about it, Tommy.”

Tommy yanks his foot back and gazes innocently at Wilbur. “Think about what? I wasn’t gonna do anything!”

Wilbur glances at him, unimpressed. “You were about to screw with Tubbo again, weren’t you,” he asks, deadpanned. Tommy does his best too look affronted.

“I was *not!*”

“You definitely were,” Tubbo chimes in. Wilbur flashes him a smile while Tommy gives him a betrayed look.

“Tubbo! I *trusted* you!”

Tubbo shrugs. “You were about to kick me again. I see no reason I should stay on your side.”

Tommy pouts, crossing his arms. “Traitor.” He turns to his side, calling, “Hey, Fundy, you’re on my side, right?”

Fundy blinks at him. “Side for what?”

“Against Tubbo and Wilbur! They’re ganging up on me!” Fundy eyes them consideringly, before sighing.

“If Tubbo and Wilbur are both against you, they probably have a good reason. I’m sticking with them.”

Tommy’s affronted, “*Hey!*” is drowned out by everyone else’s laughter. He pouts again. “Phil-”

“I am staying the fuck out of this,” Phil shoots back immediately. Niki stifles a laugh behind her hand, and Tommy slumps further back in his seat. Tubbo doesn’t even try to hide his laugh. Tommy gives him the finger.

“Traitors, all of you,” he mutters.

All he’s met with is more laughter.

-

“Holy *fuck*- Tubbo, calm down a bit, will you?”

Tubbo smiles innocently, and Tommy instantly feels more fear flow through his veins. “I won’t, actually!” Tubbo chirps.

Phil laughs, clapping Tubbo on the shoulder. “That’s my boy!” He says proudly. Tommy glares, before he yanks at Wilbur’s sleeve. Wilbur leans down obediently, and Tommy whispers in his ear.

“Okay, so what we’re gonna do, is we’re gonna take out Tubbo first- go for his fingers, then all we’ll have to worry about is Phil.”

Wilbur lets out a bark of laughter. “Tommy, we are not going to destroy Tubbo’s fingers so that he can’t play air hockey anymore,” Wilbur says amusedly. Tommy pouts.

“Why not?”

“Tommy.” Wilbur says nothing else, just raising an eyebrow at Tommy, and Tommy sighs.

“Fine,” he relents. “We’ll win through actual good playing, I guess.”

Wilbur laughs, “There you go.” He cracks his knuckles, a grin coming across his face. “We got this, Tommy.”

“Hell yeah we do!” Tommy cheers.

They do not, in fact, got this. Phil and Tubbo kick Wilbur and Tommy’s asses. It stings even more when all everyone else, Fundy and Niki included, does when Tommy pouts is laugh.

It’s still the most fun Tommy’s had in ages. Wilbur ends up giving Tommy all of his tickets. Tommy *beams* at him, and Wilbur gives him a smile and ruffles his hair. Ender, everyone’s being so *affectionate* today. Tommy doesn’t know how to handle it.

Even Kristin, Phil’s *wife*, is being affectionate. Tommy’s never really met her, just talked to her through Phil a few times, but she hugged him when they met up and encouraged him the whole time they were playing. Granted, she *did* encourage both teams, but it still made him feel warm inside.

He- he really feels like he gets to be an actual *kid* around them, causing chaos around the Arcade and being a little shit. All anyone reacts with is maybe a little annoyance, but mostly fondness.

The wide-eyed look Tubbo gets sometimes betrays he feels the same exact shock and awe Tommy feels.

“Tommy, look at how many tickets I got!” Tubbo rushes up to Tommy, hands stuffed full of tickets. Tommy grins just as widely, brandishing his own tickets.

“I got a ton, too!” His grin gains a bit of a challenging edge, then, and he says more quietly, “I bet I got more than you.” He doesn’t mention how Wilbur gave him all of his, too.

Tubbo gives him a challenging look. “You’re on,” he replies just as intensely.

In the end, Tommy wins, though it’s close. They pool their tickets together anyway, because Tubbo *really* wants a bee plush, and Tommy’s never been good at denying him what he wants.

He has enough for his vlog gun, anyway, so he’s content.

-

“I cannot *believe* you did that.”

Wilbur sounds so completely *done* as he makes his way to the group with Tommy, and Tubbo blinks up at them, curious. “What’d he do?” he asks. Wilbur sighs, shooting an arm out and

dragging Tommy into a headlock. Tommy lets out a yell, struggling immediately. Wilbur doesn't seem phased.

"This *child*-" he shakes Tommy a bit- "Decided to steal my wallet, break into my office, and start *streaming*, of all things."

Tommy whines, still held in the headlock, "It was *funny*!"

"It was ridiculous! Of all crazy things-"

"C'mon, you've got to admit it *was* funny."

"I do *not*, actually."

Tubbo stifles a laugh behind his hand, grin almost hurting his cheeks. He doesn't think he's stopped smiling yet today. "Good work, Tommy," he interrupts Wilbur's continuing tirade, holding out a hand for Tommy to high-five. Tommy beams and instantly high-fives him. Wilbur sighs, releasing Tommy and rubbing the bridge of his nose.

"Gremlins," he mutters, walking towards Phil. "Gremlins, both of you."

Tommy and Tubbo wait a moment for him to get far enough away, turn towards each other, then burst out laughing. "Did you *really* break into his office to stream?" Tubbo asks in a stage-whisper after he gains a slight amount of control over himself. Tommy grins and nods.

"Yup!"

"And how many people tuned in?"

Tommy's grin, if it's possible, spreads even wider. "Only about seventeen thousand people."

Tubbo lets out a startled laugh. "*Awesome!*"

"It was *not!*" Wilbur calls over his shoulder, and that just sends Tubbo and Tommy into hysterics again.

-

Later, after they've played all the arcade games they could desire and have wandered all around the city, Phil takes them back to his house.

Tubbo doesn't really know what to do with himself, at first. Tommy instantly gravitates towards the kitchen, and is having a passionate debate with Fundy over the best type of fried chicken. He doesn't quite know how there's anything to debate about – there's not *that* many types of fried chicken – but they've been arguing for a solid ten minutes so there must be a decent amount.

Eventually, he gravitates over to the piano he sees in the corner. It's not super fancy, but Tubbo's never cared much about that anyway. He takes a seat, places his fingers on the unfamiliar keys, and prepares to start-

“What’re you playing?”

Tubbo jumps as Wilbur leans over his shoulder, clapping a hand over his racing heart. “Fuck, Wilbur, you scared the shit out of me!” He exclaims. Wilbur chuckles, a bit apologetically.

“Sorry, sorry,” he says, holding his hands up in apology. He edges to the side of the bench; Tubbo scooches over a bit to make room for Wilbur to sit down. “So,” Wilbur says curiously. “What were you gonna play?”

Tubbo shrugs. “I dunno, really,” he says honestly. “I hadn’t decided yet when you scared the shit out of me,” he teases Wilbur lightly. Wilbur shakes his head, a sheepish grin on his face.

“Hey, I said sorry,” he protests, still smiling. Tubbo lets himself laugh a little, before he tilts his head thoughtfully and places his hands on the keys.

He hesitates, but starts plunking out the notes to *I’m In Love With An E-Girl*. He chances a glance over when Wilbur goes silent, and flushes a bit at the way Wilbur’s face has gone utterly soft.

When Tommy and Tubbo had discovered Wilbur’s music, they instantly became obsessed with it. It was...soothing, in a way that even Wilbur’s videos weren’t. No matter whether it was his calmer music or even his ridiculous E-Girl songs, Tommy loved them, and Tubbo can’t help but admit he loved them just as much.

He still listens to all of Wilbur’s albums constantly. He hasn’t played Wilbur’s songs much, he will admit, but- now that he’s with Wilbur, right here, right now, he wants to try.

Tubbo’s only a few chords in when he messes up, and he winces, waiting for the reprimand that he can’t help but expect. All that happens, though, is that Wilbur lets out a soft laugh. “Here,” he says, placing his own hand over the keys. He plays the first couple of measures of the song, then brings his hands back. “Your turn,” he urges.

Tubbo tries again. This time, he gets it, and Wilbur nudges him proudly.

They work through the whole song like that, Tubbo attempting the chords and Wilbur adjusting him. It’s not like they haven’t done this over call before, but there’s something special about doing this in person. It makes him feel warm, feeling Wilbur next to him and talking steadily to him.

He makes it through the whole song, Wilbur and him singing along, and Wilbur gives him a round of applause. “My little protégé,” Wilbur says teasingly, placing a hand on Tubbo’s head and ruffling his hair. Tubbo ducks his head, grin unbearably wide.

“Thanks for teaching me,” Tubbo mutters, and Wilbur shakes his head.

“No need to thank me. It was fun,” Wilbur says easily. Tubbo, suddenly overwhelmed with emotion, lays his head on Wilbur’s shoulder, because he- he never thought he’d ever have this.

It’s better than he could’ve ever imagined.

Wilbur doesn't react for a bit, probably startled, but eventually, he settles an arm around Tubbo's shoulder. "Anytime you want to, we can do this," he murmurs into Tubbo's hair. Tubbo closes his eyes against the sudden tears burning at their backs.

"Thanks, Wil," he whispers. Wilbur laughs.

"Anytime," he replies, and Tubbo believes him.

-

"Alright, alright," Niki laughs, yanking at the backs of Tommy and Fundy's collars. They both yelp, and she gives them a fondly patient look. "Enough arguing about types of fried chicken. Fundy, go bug Phil or something. Tommy-" and here she turns her gaze towards Tommy- "Come bake with me."

Tommy blinks at her. "You want me to bake with you?" he asks stupidly. Niki nods, brushing back the hair from her face.

"Yup! C'mon, it'll be fun."

Fundy asks, "What, don't want to spend more time with me?" but by the way he's grinning and already moving to the door, he's not actually offended. Niki rolls her eyes.

"I've spent plenty of time with you, Fundy. Now, shoo."

"Yeah, yeah, I see how it is."

Niki sighs, but when she turns back towards Tommy she's smiling. "Alright, Tommy, let's bake some killer cookies," she says. Tommy moves towards the counter, nervous knot in his stomach dissolving.

He doesn't know why he was nervous. This Niki has shown absolutely no signs of being like the Niki from *before* who wanted to hurt him. She's far more similar to the older sister she was to him, once upon a time. Tommy can trust her.

"Hell yeah," he says, and she laughs. Tommy squints at the instructions. "Okay, so we've gotta crack three eggs," he reads off. Purposefully, he makes to break the eggs by just smashing them into the bowl- predictably, Niki stops him.

"Tommy, stop!" She laughs, snatching the eggs from his hands. "Seriously, you've gotta know that that's not how you break eggs into a bowl."

Tommy shrugs as if ignorant. "You've just gotta break them, right?"

"No!" Even now, when she should, by any rights, be annoyed, she's still smiling. Tommy lets the final remnants of his nervous tension dissolve, and moves close to the counter again.

"Alright, alright, let's try this again." This time, he's more careful, and she actually lets him break the eggs into the bowl.

She says encouragingly, “There we go, Tommy. Now, we’ve got to…”

The cookies, in the end, do end up being *really* good.

Tommy and Niki may end up entirely covered in flour, but the reason why is for them to know and laugh about and for the others to just wonder about.

And Niki, once again, becomes one of the people held close and dear to Tommy’s heart.

-

“Tommy, take *this!* And green, by the way.”

Tommy scoffs, but Tubbo can see the faint lines of nervousness lined into his forehead. “Ah-well- you see,” he delays, looking frantically through his cards. His eyes alight, then, and Tubbo sighs as he goes, “Aha! Take *that*, Fundy! I want red.”

Fundy groans, staring at the two plus-fours on the table in front of him. “You suck,” he says mulishly, reaching for the draw pile. Tommy just cackles.

Wilbur side-eyes Tommy from next to Tubbo, something glinting in his eyes. Tubbo makes a mental note to not reverse the directions. He’ll let Tommy take whatever Wilbur’s planning, thank you. “Your turn, Phil!” Tubbo chirps, not betraying any of his thoughts.

“You all are so chaotic,” Phil says, but his grin glints as he places down a plus two. “Draw two, Niki.”

“I won’t, actually,” Niki responds, placing another *two* plus-twos on top of Phil’s. The stacking rules are brutal, Tubbo notes, wincing. He stares at the pile in front of him, three plus-twos staring him down. Niki says sweetly, “Your turn, Tubbo.”

Good thing he’s prepared. “Sorry, Wilbur,” he says, placing down another plus-two. Wilbur rolls his eyes.

“You wish you could get me with that,” he says. And he places down *five* plus-twos.

All Tubbo can do is stare.

Tommy, on the other side of Wilbur, groans. “Are you fuckin’ *kidding* me?!” He whines. Wilbur just gives him a look.

“Draw your cards, Tommy,” he says casually. For some reason, it feels incredibly threatening.

Tommy whines, “Come *on!*” but picks up his cards anyway. In the end, he has to draw eighteen cards.

Tubbo stares at his hand. “Fucking rest in peace, man,” he says, and Tommy flips him off.

“Fuck you, man.” All of them laugh.

Wilbur perks up. “You know, guys, after this we should play monopoly!”

“No,” the whole room choruses. Wilbur rears up in indignation.

“But-”

“No.”

Wilbur pouts. “You all suck.”

Phil deadpans, “Wilbur, that game would have us all murdering each other within seconds. Let’s stick to the game that gives us slightly less murderous urges, shall we?”

“Okay,” Wilbur sighs.

Wilbur loses Uno the next three rounds, slamming his head on the table after the third loss. It’s impossible not to laugh about it.

-

They all unanimously decide to sleep over that night. Everyone’s too tired to go back home, and a quick text to Tommy and Tubbo’s parents confirms that they’re fine with them staying. Tommy can’t help but grin, unfairly gleeful at the thought.

He sprawls over the couch, throwing his legs over Fundy’s lap and laying his head down in Niki’s. Niki blinks down at him. He just grins up. “Hi!” He chirps, making himself comfortable. Niki just laughs softly, playing with the ends of his hair.

“Hi,” she responds, amused. “Comfortable?”

“Yup,” he says, voice already going slurred. He’s a lot more tired than he thought he would be- but, then again, he and Tubbo had stayed up until about three in the morning the night before, and they’d gotten up at eight the next day. It’s really no wonder he’s tired.

Niki runs a hand through his hair, then, and Tommy relaxes completely into her lap. Ender, he missed having his hair played with like this. “You like that?” she whispers softly, and Tommy nods as much as he can while laying down. “Alright.” She keeps on doing it. Tommy’s in bliss.

Well, Niki’s clearly fine with him staying there. Fundy gives him a look, but there must be something soft in that heart of his because he just sighs and rests his arms on top of Tommy’s shins. “If you kick me, I’m tickling the shit out of you,” he warns. Tommy just gives him a thumbs-up.

“Sure thing, bossman,” he agrees, eyes already closed.

Before he knows it, he’s asleep.

-

Tubbo watches everyone get settled down, something nervous knotting in his gut yet again. Tommy seems so comfortable already with everyone, sprawling himself all over Fundy's and Niki's laps. Tubbo doesn't think he can do that, yet.

His eyes land on Phil, sitting in an armchair and reading a book. His legs are casually resting against the chair, and, Tubbo notes, in the perfect position to be leaned against. Tubbo nods, and starts making his way over before he can change his mind.

Hesitantly, he takes a seat on the floor, and leans up against Phil's legs. He doesn't look up at Phil; he can only guess what his reaction is. "You alright down there?" he asks, and to Tubbo's slight relief, all he sounds like is amused.

"Yup!" he says cheerfully, and Phil lets out a laughing exhale.

He says, "Alright, feel free to stay there, then." It's all the invitation Tubbo needs to lean fully against Phil's legs. They're strangely comfortable, and the carpet beneath Tubbo is soft.

And so, once he starts falling asleep, there's no stopping himself from fully crashing.

-

Wilbur comes into the living room after cleaning up, and instantly, his heart goes soft. "Hey," he whispers, careful to not make too much noise as he picks his way across the room.

Phil, the only one still awake, glances up at him. "Hey," he responds. He puts his book carefully down on the side table. He adjusts himself slightly, careful not to jar Tubbo too much. Thankfully, all that happens is Tubbo's head lolling slightly to the side.

"They're really out of it, huh," Wilbur mutters, a small smile tugging at his lips. Phil lets out a breathy chuckle.

"Yeah, they really are." Phil looks down at Tubbo, and runs a gentle hand through his hair. Tubbo sighs a bit and leans into the touch. Phil's lips quirk. "I can't blame any of them," he murmurs. "It's been a long day."

"Yeah." Wilbur makes his way towards the hallway, grabbing blankets from the closet at the end and bringing them back. Carefully, he drapes one over Tommy and Fundy both, and wraps another around Niki's shoulders. She's the only one that reacts, mumbling softly in her sleep and tucking the blanket further around her.

He places one slowly on top of Tubbo, too, and he doesn't react other than snuggling a little deeper into the blanket. Wilbur can't help but soften even more at the sight.

Finally content, he takes a seat on the armrest next to where Tommy and Niki are settled, and runs a hand through Tommy's locks. Tommy grumbles a little in his sleep, but turns his face slightly towards Wilbur's hand. Wilbur's heart feels about ready to *burst*.

Phil seems to agree, a painfully fond smile tugging at his lips. "They're good kids," he murmurs, gaze cast down towards Tubbo again before he glances at Tommy, at Niki, at Fundy, gaze finally settling on Wilbur. "All of them."

“Yeah,” Wilbur agrees. And they are. Niki and Fundy, Wilbur’s known for a while and met in person a few times. Still, it’s always nice getting to see them, and despite only being a few years older than them, he’s fiercely proud of how far they’ve come.

Tubbo and Tommy, though – Wilbur’s not quite sure how, but they’ve both wormed their way firmly into Wilbur’s heart. Tommy first, with his loud presence and contagious laugh; and then Tubbo, with his overwhelming brightness and chaotic mischievousness.

They’ve both grown *so much* since Wilbur first met them. He remembers meeting them, those first few weeks of SMP Earth and thinking, *these kids are gonna be big one day*.

He was right, and fuck if he isn’t so incredibly proud of them both.

“I’m glad we let them come today,” Wilbur admits after a moment. He glances over in time to see Phil nod, leaning back into his seat. He still hasn’t let Tubbo move from his spot, Wilbur notes. Something warm clenches in his heart as Tubbo sighs softly, snuggling further into the blanket and back into Phil’s legs.

Phil laughs a little, brushing back Tubbo’s hair once again. “That can’t be comfortable,” he mutters, before he turns to face Wilbur again. “Yeah, I am too,” he responds. “They had a blast, and were also a lot of fun to be around.”

“Yeah.” Wilbur had been nervous about meeting his unofficial little brothers in person, but it’s been nice. It’s been really, really nice.

Wilbur yawns, and Phil gives him a small, fond smile. “Looks like someone else should be heading to bed,” he teases. Wilbur glares at him a bit, but reluctantly nods, standing up.

“Yeah, I will,” he acquiesces. He casts one final glance across the room. “Let me know if you need anything, alright?”

“Alright.” Phil gives him one final smile. “G’night, Wil.” Wilbur waves over his shoulder.

“G’night, Phil.”

-

In the end, to Tommy, the most precious memories aren’t the ones he ended up vlogging.

The moments that made it into the vlog were fun, he’ll admit. The whole visit was fun. But the most important bits weren’t in the vlog.

Instead, the most important moments are when Wilbur threw his arm around Tommy’s shoulder and showed him the proper way to skip a rock; when he jumped on Fundy’s back, and Fundy yelped before readjusting, only grumbling a little bit before allowing Tommy to continue to cling on.

They’re the moments laughing with Niki, throwing flour at each other and daring each other to do increasingly strange things to the cake; the moment when Phil ruffled his hair, giving him the biggest grin and telling him that he was proud after he won a game of Uno.

They're the moments with Tubbo, holding hands and tugging each other along to do who-knows-what.

Tommy holds the vlog close to his heart. He thinks he always will. But...in the end, what made the day special was the moments spent off-camera, not on.

And in the end, that's what Tommy thinks he will remember most.

Chapter End Notes

you guys are gonna like next chapter ;)

thanks for reading, hope you enjoyed!! <3

the return

Chapter Summary

Ranboo's got to be honest, when he woke up this morning, he did not expect this to happen.

"Tubbo- Tubbo, get your ass over here, I need to show you something!"

"Tommy, be *patient*."

Staring at the screen, the first thought Ranboo has is ...*huh*. The second isn't a thought, really, but he's suddenly breathing quicker, and his eyes are burning with tears.

Chapter Notes

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See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Ranboo's got to be honest, when he woke up this morning, he did not expect this to happen.

"Tubbo- Tubbo, get your ass over here, I need to show you something!"

"Tommy, be *patient*."

Staring at the screen, the first thought Ranboo has is ...*huh*. The second isn't a thought, really, but he's suddenly breathing quicker, and his eyes are burning with tears.

Ever since Ranboo was young, he's had dreams. Or visions, or flashes of memory, or whatever you want to call them- the point is, he's been remembering a whole other life for as long as he can recall. When he was younger, he never really knew what they were, just that these flashes- they're *important*.

As he got older, though, he realized that they weren't normal, these dreams. It wasn't normal to wake up sobbing, remembering a whole other life. It wasn't normal to long for people he's never met. It wasn't normal to "imagine" living and dying and *being* in a whole other world.

He didn't accept they were real for a long time, but, eventually, he had no choice but to.

His parents worried about him when he was younger. Eventually, though, he learned to be able to hide when he's having flashbacks or remembering anything. They were relieved. He's

glad. He doesn't want to worry them. They're good to him, even if he's always been different.

Growing up, he didn't ever...really do what he was expected to do. What every other child around him did. He didn't really make friends, being tall and intimidating, and never really being one to reach out for others in the first place. He would read, and write sometimes, and get sucked into his memories. No one would notice.

It's pure happenstance that he stumbled across an article talking about the Dream SMP, and, well. Now he's here, watching his two best friends from his past life yell at each other through a screen.

"I will *not* be patient! Hurry the fuck up!"

"Fucking hell- I'm coming, Tommy, hold on!"

"Fuckin' *finally!*"

Ranboo reaches out, hand trembling, and traces his fingers over the little facecams on his screen. He'd found Tommy's stream first, his frantic searches leading directly to him, but Tubbo's is open on the other side of the screen. And- ender, they look so *similar*.

Tubbo looks the most different. Of course, there's the lack of horns and lack of scars- and, just seeing Tubbo's face, clean and unmarred makes Ranboo want to start crying even harder. His hair's a little shorter, more controlled, but...really, the biggest thing is-

He's *laughing*. His eyes are so bright, so *free*, and there's a no shadows dancing through the depths. He seems so *happy*. Ranboo's seen his husband laugh so many times; been the one to *make* him laugh many of those times, but he doesn't think he's ever seen Tubbo look this exuberant.

And, Tommy- Tommy looks almost exactly the same, physically. He'd always been a normal human, and complained about the fact more than enough times for Ranboo to remember his resentment against being "normal." But, he also doesn't have any of his scars, and he looks *just* as happy as Tubbo does.

He laughs ridiculously easily. He's quick to make a joke, and when he makes Tubbo laugh, something satisfied sets into his expression, his smile growing a little softer. The pure *care* that Tommy has for Tubbo is *so* unbelievably obvious. Or maybe that's just Ranboo – Ender knows he's seen that tender look from Tommy aimed at Tubbo many, many times.

Ender. They're here- or not *here*, rather, but they're alive. At least *some* version of them is; Ranboo has no illusions towards them somehow also remembering their past. He can hope, but honestly, the hope would be too much to bear. Too painful should it not be true.

It's already a lot knowing that some version of them exists in this world, too.

Ranboo exhales shakily, finally wrenching his eyes away from the screen and scrunching them shut. The tears that have been threatening finally start trailing down his cheeks, and he

lets out a choked sob against his will. They're alive. *They're alive.*

Ender, how long has it been since he's seen their faces?

And they're both so *happy*, too. Ranboo hadn't seen them both smile that freely in...forever, probably. Even when they were all living together, safe from Dream (or so they thought), there was still a lot haunting them.

Now, they're free, and happy, and together. Ranboo's so happy for them- he's *so* unbelievably happy that *some* version of them, at least, get to live the lives they always deserved. If it couldn't happen in their past life, at least it could happen here.

But, Ranboo thinks, rubbing furiously at his eyes, he's *so lonely*.

He *misses* them. He misses Tubbo's smile, and Tommy's laugh, and Tubbo's indignation when Ranboo makes puns, and Tommy's soft teasing, and Tubbo's hugs, and Tommy's gruff affection. He misses them- he's missed them more every single day that's passed, but the longing hits so hard in that moment that it *aches*.

Ranboo sits up straight, then, and gives Tubbo and Tommy one final fond look before he tabs away, keeping their voices on in the background. Instead, he goes to google, and starts searching. Researching; planning. If there's any way for him to even have a *chance* of meeting some version of his best friends, he's got to become a content creator.

The next week, he releases his first video, and hopes that someday, he might make it big enough to talk to them again.

-

After a month and a half pass of absolutely no lore, Tubbo finds himself tentatively hoping that maybe, nothing else will happen. That the first set of streams was a fluke, that it's back to just being a normal server.

He should've known he wouldn't be that lucky.

One day, Wilbur comes at them with an idea for the Dream SMP – for them to hold an election. Tubbo's not physically with Tommy, but if he were, Tubbo bets he'd be holding Tommy's hand as hard as he can.

Voice carefully controlled, Tubbo asks, "Why an election?" Wilbur just shrugs.

"It'll bring more attention to the SMP," he explains. "People loved the whole war stuff, and my character has a good reason to pull something like this."

Tommy, camera on, sits up a little bit straighter. "Your character?" He asks. Something clenches in Tubbo's chest – Tommy's always, *always* desperately questioned why the Wilbur from *before* ended up the way he did. Tubbo can't blame him for asking; if he were in Tommy's place, he'd undoubtedly do the same.

Wilbur narrows his eyes slightly in suspicion, but expands easily enough. “He wants power,” Wilbur says. “We can easily make it so that I – character me, that is – am scared of losing power. I’m sure we can get some people to run against us. We’ll probably just win again, but it’d be interesting for the plot, at least.”

Tommy’s quiet for a long moment. Tubbo remains silent, as well, letting Tommy take the lead. “Sound fun, big man,” Tommy says finally. Kudos to him, his voice only sounds slightly strained. “When you wanna start it?”

Wilbur shrugs again. “Next stream?” he suggests. “We can do this whole lead-up segment, with propaganda and debates and all that shit. Our characters will pretend to want to hide the fact that the election’s happening in the first place. It’ll be fun.”

“Sure, Wilbur,” Tubbo agrees, masking his nervousness with a smile. Wilbur brightens at their agreement.

“Thanks, boys!” He makes to log off, but then adds, “Hey, you both want to listen to me practice my song later?”

This time, when Tubbo smiles, it’s entirely real, even if tinged with relief. Tommy perks back up and answers excitedly, “Hell yeah!”

“What he said,” Tubbo agrees, grinning. Wilbur smiles, and this time, it’s all softness. Something in Tubbo’s heart softens. He’s been used to everyone, especially Wilbur, caring about them so much, but it still shocks him sometimes.

“See you later, then,” Wilbur says. This time, he actually leaves the call. Tubbo collapses back in his chair, rubbing the bridge of his nose.

Tommy sighs, “This isn’t gonna be fun, is it.”

“No, it probably isn’t,” Tubbo mutters, re-opening his eyes. He says quietly, “Better prepare ourselves, then.” Tommy nods.

“Yeah. Yeah, we’d better.” Tommy’s eyes soften, then, and he murmurs, “Hey, it’ll be alright.”

Tubbo lets out a breath. “Yeah, I know.” He flicks his eyes up to Tommy. “I trust Wilbur, and you. It’ll be fine.”

“It will be.” Tommy gives him a reassuring smile, and there’s nothing Tubbo can do but echo it back.

-

The election happens the same exact way as last time.

Tommy knows he and Tubbo both have reassured themselves and each other that it’d be fine, going into the election. But- even then, running away from the stage, even in a game- all the memories come rushing back.

Running, running, running. Hearing Wilbur's gasp of pain as he gets shot down from right next to Tommy. Running, running. Reading Wilbur's death message in the chat. Hearing Schlatt demand for Tubbo to chase Tommy and Wilbur down. Hearing Tubbo shakily agree. Running. Running. Running.

Finally escaping into the woods; digging themselves a little hole in the side of a hill. Finding the ravine. Hearing the speeches. Getting offered help from Technoblade. Hiding from searches. Running. Forever running.

Even though it's through a different medium, even though Tommy's not truly experiencing all of this again, even though he can't *feel* the burn in his legs and the scrapes on his arms, it sure as hell feels like it.

Wilbur doesn't seem to notice how shaky Tommy is, thankfully. He does his best to hide it, but if his mouse movements are a little more stilted than normal, if he feels his heart thumping far too quickly in his chest, if he glances over at Tubbo's stream to make sure he's okay more times than he normally would, well. No one has the right to blame him.

Finally, the stream ends. He lets the tension leech out of his shoulders, and hears another ping echo through the call as Wilbur sighs. Tommy tabs over to see Wilbur's face. He looks satisfied. "Damn, that stream did *not* go the way I was expecting it to," Wilbur admits, running a hand through his hair. Tommy stares at him.

"Did you really not plan out the election?" Tommy asks curiously. Wilbur shakes his head.

"Nah."

"Why?"

Wilbur shrugs. "Why not? I planned out all the storylines for what we'd do depending on the outcome, but this is an outcome that I barely even planned for. It-" And here, Wilbur's grin grows a little bit more excited, "It's *perfect*."

Tommy stiffens slightly at the tone Wilbur's voice gains. It's a little- a little *too* similar to-

"Tommy." Tommy shakes himself out of his thoughts, meeting Wilbur's eyes again. Well, as well as he can meet his eyes through a screen, anyway. Wilbur leans forward in his seat, his expression serious. "I have some ideas for where I want to take my story," Wilbur starts. "But what I want to do will end up with some really shitty stuff happening to your character."

Tommy eyes him warily. He can guess- well, he *knows* what Wilbur's thinking, but he still asks, "What sort of stuff?"

"Manipulation to start," Wilbur answers. "That's probably going to be the main issue, plus my character growing more and more mentally unstable as time goes on." Wilbur eyes Tommy for a moment, then finally admits, "I'm gonna have to say some shitty things to you, Tommy."

Breathing in deeply, Tommy slowly lets out his breath. "Okay," Tommy says. "And?"

“I’m asking if you’re okay with this, Tommy,” Wilbur says seriously. “These are heavy themes. You have no obligation to go along with this- it’s your story, too.”

Tommy takes a moment to really think about it. Yes, he knows that the story’s important, especially to keep the popularity of the story growing and to maybe, *maybe*, reach Ranboo, but...there are other ways to do that, right?

But...it may not be the *best* way.

Sighing slightly, Tommy concedes, “We can do it, Wilbur. Just...let me know in advance when it’s gonna be intense?” Tommy asks hesitantly. Wilbur nods immediately, dissolving all of Tommy’s fears.

“Course, Tommy,” he says warmly. Tommy lets himself relax, and grins slightly.

“Then let’s make this the best damn story anyone could ask for.”

Wilbur grins right back. “Hell yeah, that’s what I like to hear.”

-

The era after Wilbur and Tommy are exiled is...not as bad as Tubbo had feared.

It’s not great, of course. At least, not the roleplay aspects. He barely has to act when he’s fearfully tearing down the walls; barely has to add to the badly-hidden trembling in his voice when Schlatt talks to him. And wasn’t *that* a pleasant surprise, logging onto the server one day to find out that Schlatt was, indeed, going to be running for president. Maybe his wishes were unreasonable, but he’d *really* hoped that Schlatt not showing up beforehand meant the story wasn’t going to be going that way, after all.

Apparently not.

It’s...not horrible, though. After that first stream, Tubbo half-expects to be left alone after it. His heart’s still racing, hands clammy from sweat. He did his best to hide it from the cameras. He’s not sure he succeeded. He hopes he did.

Still, though, after stream, everyone remains on call. And, surprisingly, though Schlatt seemed almost *exactly* the same as his *before* counterpart during the entire stream, he’s surprisingly calm after. Laid back and relaxed.

Tubbo supposes he really shouldn’t be surprised. It’s not like anyone, other than Tommy, of course, has been the exact same as their counterpart from *before*.

“Hey, you did a good job, kid.” Tubbo jumps in shock as Schlatt addresses him. Schlatt’s turned on his camera, and he looks genuine as he looks at Tubbo. Tubbo laughs haltingly, turning on his own camera.

He says, shier than he would’ve liked, “Thanks, Schlatt.” He pauses, before murmuring, “You, too.”

Schlatt laughs. “It was nothing. Oi, Quackity, get off mute and come talk to us!” He suddenly hollers, and it takes all Tubbo has not to jump again. Damn, he’s really jumpy today. Not that he can blame himself, but still.

“I’m here, I’m here, jeez!” Quackity complains, turning on his own camera. He grins, running a hand through his hair. “Seriously, though, Tubbo, you did great.”

Quackity isn’t someone that Tubbo’s interacted with much before. But, now, Tubbo can definitely see himself becoming friends with him. Unlike what he’s seen of Schlatt, his roleplay character is *completely* different than how he is anytime outside the Dream SMP. He’s completely ridiculous, making jokes and doing his best to make everyone around him laugh as much as possible.

Tubbo can’t help but appreciate it.

“Thanks, Q,” he says, grin becoming a little more genuine. “What’re the plans for later on?” he asks curiously. They both shrug.

“Honestly, Wilbur’s mostly taking the reins on most of the story,” Schlatt says. His relaxed tone is much different than his “evil president” voice – Tubbo’s glad. It helps separate him from the him from *before*. Not that he doesn’t plan on quizzing Schlatt anyway, but still.

Quackity continues, “Yeah, we’ll probably add in our own ideas – others will probably have thoughts, too, but most of it is Wilbur.”

Tubbo nods. “Makes sense.” Tubbo waits a moment, then says, “I’m going to head out now, guys.”

“Alright, Tubbo! See you tomorrow!”

Tubbo whispers back, “See you tomorrow,” and leaves the call.

Then, he groans, and allows his head to slam down onto his desk. *Fuck*, he’s not sure he’s going to be able to handle this for the next however many *months*.

Tommy calls him about five minutes later. He’s still in the same position, barely moving his hand so he can accept the call. He still doesn’t move.

“You good?” Tommy asks, sounding both amused and concerned. More concerned, at the moment, which- well. It makes sense.

Tubbo groans, “Yeah, I’m decent.”

Tommy’s quiet for a moment, then mutters, “That was fuckin’ exhausting, wasn’t it.”

“Yeah.” Tubbo lets out a slightly-hysterical laugh. “Really didn’t want to have to drag back up those memories, I’m gonna be honest.”

He sits back up in his chair, catching Tommy run a hand through his hair. He’s either stressed, or he’s doing it more because Wilbur does it constantly. Probably both, knowing him.

“Yeah...you doing alright with Schlatt?”

Tubbo sighs, “Yeah, actually, surprisingly enough.” Tommy’s shoulders slump.

“That’s good. I was worried.”

Laughing fondly, Tubbo reassures, “I’m alright, I promise. He’s strangely chill off stream.”

“Yeah, that doesn’t surprise me.” Tommy blushes a little, then admits, “I watched a few of the streams he was in with Wil- he was similar to before, on those streams, but he had moments he seemed to let his persona drop.”

Tubbo gives Tommy a look. “Why’d you not tell me? Did you think I’d be pissed?”

Tommy shakes his head, head still bowed a little bit. “Nah, it’s more I didn’t want you to have to think about him more.”

Tubbo’s lips quirk slightly. Tommy’s really a sweetheart, no matter how hard he tries to hide it. “That’s real sweet of you, Toms. Thanks. I appreciate it.”

“Yeah, of course,” Tommy gives Tubbo a smile, and for the first time that day, Tubbo returns his smile with a fully real smile of his own.

“Now, we’ve just gotta hope that all these streams aren’t horrible!” Tubbo cheers, only slightly insincere. Tommy laughs slightly.

“Yeah!” His smile turns a little mischievous. “I’m sure we can come up with increasingly stupid ways to sneak you out of Manberg.”

Tubbo returns that smile. “Tommy, you don’t even *know* the plans I have for that.”

They’ll make the best of this.

-

“Techno!”

Tommy cheers as Techno joins the call, something in his chest loosening. When Technoblade joined them the first time, Tommy’d been scared out of his mind. Of Technoblade, of being caught, of being on the run from everyone he’d ever trusted. (Except for Tubbo. Even after his exile, he never fully lost his trust in his best friend.)

Now, though, he’s just excited, because Techno’s one of his closest friends and this is gonna be *fun*.

“Hey there, child,” he greets. His words aren’t soft at all, but Tommy thinks he can hear a bit of affection threading through his tone. His smile grows a little wider.

“You ready to overthrow a government?” Wilbur pipes in, and Techno scoffs.

“Is that even a question, Wilbur?”

Tommy laughs. “It’s the *Blade*, Wilbur!” He says, grinning. “Of course he’s ready!”

“See- Tommy gets me, Wilbur.”

Wilbur sighs, “I see how it is.” Tommy can hear the smile in his words. His excitement grows a little bit more. He’s nervous as all hell for this arc of the story, to relive this part of his life, but- he thinks, if the majority of the moments are like this, he’ll be just fine.

-

He’s not just fine.

Wilbur’s a *damn good actor*, when he wants to be, Tommy discovers. He’d spent almost the entire second half of the stream, only a couple of weeks into their exile, rambling on and on and *on* about wanting to be the bad guy and ignoring everything that Tommy had tried to interject.

Tommy knows that it’s just a story. He knows that Wilbur’s just playing a part. He knows that he gave Wilbur *permission* to do this, but- he can’t-

“Let’s be the bad guys, Tommy!” Wilbur exclaims, wild grin on his face.

They sounded exactly the same.

Tommy’s heart hasn’t slowed down, even though that part of the story ended over an hour ago, and they just ended their stream.

Seeing Dream acting like his normal (*no, not normal, he’s playing a character again, remember that, Tommy*), assholeish self doesn’t help Tommy’s heart-rate either.

“Man, I missed acting out stuff like that,” Wilbur says. He opens his eyes, then, and Tommy scrambles to hide the way his hands are shaking; the wavering in his expression. He doesn’t think he’s quick enough. Wilbur’s eyes narrow slightly in concern. “Tommy? You alright?” Wilbur asks worriedly.

Tommy looks down and fiddles with his headphone straps. “I’m fine, Wil,” he says. He’s not even subtle with the fact that he’s lying. Maybe it’s yet another test to prove that Wilbur’s not the Wilbur from *before*. Maybe he’s just too tired.

Wilbur just looks even more concerned at Tommy’s response. “Tommy...” He leans forward in his chair, voice gentle. “You know we don’t have to act out this stuff if it makes you truly uncomfortable, right?”

“No- it’s fine, Wilbur,” Tommy protests, and Wilbur tuts.

“Tommy, don’t throw away your own mental health for the sake of a story,” Wilbur chides. Tommy withdraws a little and wrings his hands together.

He says a little quieter, “I promise I am fine, Wil. Just...” Tommy trails off.

“Just?” Wilbur prompts.

“Can we make sure to hang out after we do stuff like that? Just chill out?” Tommy asks, hating the desperate tinge to his voice. “Sometimes I just...I’ve always had trouble separating myself from scenes like that, sometimes.”

Wilbur seems to soften even more. “Oh, Tommy,” Wilbur says sympathetically. “Of course, we can do that. Just know you’re much more important than this stupid story, alright?”

Tommy carefully holds back a wince. It’s not like it’s possible for Wilbur to know that this *stupid story* was Tommy’s life, once upon a time. “That’d be nice, Wilbur,” he says softly.

“Then we’ll do it,” Wilbur decides, nodding. He then follows up with, “Toms, just remember I’d never actually think these things about you, alright? You’re one of my precious little brothers, after all.”

Tommy fights down a blush, and finally looks up again, grinning shyly. “And you’re my big brother, Wil,” he admits. “Thanks.”

Wilbur smiles warmly, finally relaxing and leaning back. “Anytime, Toms.” And then, “You wanna hear my new song again?”

Perking up, Tommy jerks forward and says excitedly, “Oh Wilbur- *please*, you know I love it-”

Laughing, Wilbur grabs his guitar, and Tommy claps excitedly. “Let’s do it, then,” he says, grinning.

They spend the rest of the night singing and laughing together. It makes the sick feeling from Tommy’s stream just...go away, after a while. It’s nice.

It’s nice remembering that part of his life is over, now.

-

Holy crap.

Ranboo stares at the screen, hands trembling slightly as he exits out of the now-finished stream. That...that was...

Holy crap.

Ranboo knew that Pogtopia was not a great time for his best friends. He knew that Tommy and Tubbo suffered a lot- that they both still had nightmares about that period of their life, even when they were all together a year later. He knew that Tubbo still was struck by nightmares constantly, knew that there was a reason Tommy sometimes went on a walk in the middle of the night.

He knew that. He still wasn't prepared for *this*.

He now knows why Tubbo was always so *good* at controlling his facial expressions and shoving down every emotion down deep – he had to be, to survive in the Schlatt administration. He knows why Tommy never really trusted Wilbur; Ranboo wouldn't, either, if he spent all that time being berated by Wilbur day after day after day.

He knows why Tommy and Tubbo fear being apart from each other, if they had to do all this to stay together and *then* had Tommy's exile happen not too long after.

Ender. His best friends have been through so *much*.

Not for the first time, Ranboo curses the ocean between them. Even if this Tommy and Tubbo probably aren't *his* Tommy and Tubbo, he still *yearns* to be by their sides through this. If it is them, he can't imagine the suffering they're going through. And if they're not...well, he'd still like to have at least some version of them back.

Something twists in Ranboo's chest, and he winces.

That is...he'd love to have them back, but that's assuming they want him back in the first place.

Even though they're going through hell during their roleplay streams, Ranboo still sees them stream other times, too. They're *always* streaming together, whether it's on the SMP, or playing other games, or just crashing randomly into other streams and taking them over. (Mostly Phil's, to be honest.)

It's so incredibly clear that they're best friends. Whether that carries over from a past life or not, does Ranboo really have the right to throw off their dynamic like that? To barge into their friendship again, just like he did last time?

He's not sure. He doesn't think so.

Ranboo sighs, sinking back into his seat and rubbing between his eyes, shoulders heavy. Content creation is...difficult, sometimes. It's worth it, he knows it is, and he's honestly growing so much faster than he thought he would. But- it's hard to motivate himself to do it, sometimes, when he still hasn't heard so much of a whisper of Tommy and Tubbo noticing him.

Part of him yells for him to reach out to them himself. The larger part of him, the more reasonable part of him, knows that for one thing, he wouldn't be able to break through the wall that their DMs probably are. He can't imagine they get less than 100 friend requests a day. He doubts they'd notice him.

And, also...

He can't shake the thought that he'd be intruding. He knows that *his* Tubbo and Tommy would strike him down where he stands if they knew he was thinking like that, but...

It's been at least eight decades since he last heard their voices. He can't bring himself to listen to their ghosts right now.

Finally, he sighs and sits back up. He needs to get back to work. If he does that, maybe...just *maybe*...

Maybe, he'll be able to see his friends again.

-

The festival comes much more quickly than Tubbo's ready for.

He knows the signs- knows the buildup. He heard the speech that Schlatt spouted in front of everyone, announcing the festival. He was asked to decorate; he accepted. He arranged the festivities and decorated all around, making Manberg look as pretty as it could be.

Still, the day comes much too quickly.

"You gonna be alright?" Tommy asks in a low voice as they're preparing to start streaming. They've made a tradition of Facetimeing before every lore stream- to check up on each other, to get reassurance. Tubbo takes in a deep breath; lets it out slowly.

He says calmly, "Yeah, I'll be fine." Tommy raises an eyebrow at him.

"You know you can bow out of this, right?"

Tubbo lets out a humorless laugh. "No, I can't," he says blandly. Tommy sighs, shoulders slumping.

"Wilbur would figure something out," Tommy tries one more time. Tubbo tries for a reassuring smile, shaking his head slightly.

"No, it wouldn't work. Everything's already planned out."

Tommy's quiet for a moment, eyes searching Tubbo. For what, he doesn't know, but Tommy finally lets out a breath and nods. "You've always been too stubborn for your own good," he mutters. "Come find me right after, alright?"

Tubbo's smile grows a little more real, and he nods. "You've got it, bossman," he promises.

Just like last time, Tommy'll be there to catch him.

Tubbo would be lying if he wasn't relieved.

-

The festival is exactly as bad as Tubbo feared.

At the beginning, it's fine. It's fun, almost, playing the games and showing off the decorations that Tubbo so carefully put out. Still, the heavy dread doesn't let Tubbo go the

entirety of the first part of the stream.

The conversation with Wilbur and Tommy, discussing their plan to blow up L'Manberg, doesn't help. Wilbur's perfectly acting out his insanity; Tubbo knows Tommy's barely acting when it comes to how concerned he sounds. And when Tubbo's told the codewords to say to tell Wilbur to set off the explosions, his shoulders slump.

Wilbur- *before* Wilbur, not this Wilbur- really just found him valuable to be used, huh. Not a fun thought.

The stage doesn't look the same, really, but when his character gets surrounded by yellow concrete after his speech, it feels just the same.

Tubbo feels trapped.

"Schlatt- Schlatt, I'm trapped," he says- pleads, honestly. It comes out entirely too shaky. He can't stop it. Schlatt's laugh feels far too real, and against Tubbo's will, he starts trembling.

Schlatt issues the command for Tubbo to die, and the shaky exhale he lets out is entirely real.

The rest passes- quickly. Techno comes up. His voice is dry and uncaring when he threatens Tubbo. It rings exactly the same as it does in Tubbo's memories. Schlatt demands again- the same. Technoblade apologizes- the same.

Tubbo can almost feel the burning when the fireworks go off within his screen.

Honestly, he's not sure how he gets the wherewithal to make his way to the tunnels to meet Tommy. He's dazed, almost- his face feels hot. It feels painful. He knows, intellectually, that he doesn't have the burns. That doesn't stop him from feeling like it.

Fuck, it hurts.

He almost sobs when he sees Tommy's character. He can't hug him, but he slots briefly against his side, Tommy gestures towards him, crouching a few times, as if he wishes the same. It's not enough, but it has to be, for now. They make it to Pogtopia, and hearing the events of the Pit when he *isn't* half dead- it's hard. It's hard, hearing Tommy's pure *anger* at Tubbo's death; hard knowing that it's real; hard knowing that Technoblade truly did not give a single *shit* that he killed Tubbo.

Harder still knowing that Wilbur could have saved him, and didn't.

He makes it through the rest of the stream- barely. As soon as his stream ends, him sending his chat off to Phil, who's streaming hardcore, he collapses forward onto his desk.

Tommy facetimes him, and he answers, but doesn't say a word. Neither of them do, for a moment, and when he cracks his eyes open Tommy's just staring at him. Considering. Worried. Concerned. All three, mixed together.

"I'm coming over," Tommy decides, and suddenly the camera's moving, as if Tommy's running. "Fuck- fuck this. I'll be there in a few hours."

Tubbo laughs, and to his horror, it comes out more as a sob. “Okay, Tommy,” he whispers. He puts his phone down, closes his eyes. He thinks he could sleep forever if he tried. He’s not sure he could sleep at all. “Okay,” he whispers.

His cheeks still burn.

-

Ranboo doesn’t curse. He just doesn’t- he has other ways to express emotion. Cursing doesn’t need to be one of them. Crying does more than enough for him, honestly.

Still, staring at the screen in front of him, Ranboo thinks he can understand why people feel the need to swear. The screen’s blank, but Ranboo can still swear he can see his husband’s terrified face plastered all over it.

His heart hurts.

The festival- Ranboo knew about the festival, a little bit. He knew it was an event- a *big* one- that happened. He also knew it was an event that Tommy and Tubbo, especially Tubbo, always refused to talk about. He didn’t really understand why, but they all had their secrets. Ranboo had more than most, he knows, so he never really...questioned it.

How stupid.

He *should’ve* questioned it. He should’ve realized that Tubbo’s hesitation against going to the arctic wasn’t just his fear of other people, it was his fear of *Technoblade*, specifically. Technoblade *killed* Tubbo; killed him in a way that Ranboo now knows gave Tubbo the scars that haunted him for the rest of his life. Ranboo remembers helping Tubbo apply burn cream to them every night. Otherwise, Tubbo would be wracked with pain and not be able to sleep.

Instead, he didn’t question it, and was *friends* with the one who killed Tubbo. How could he be so *stupid*?

He buries his head in his hands. How could Tubbo even stand to stay near him, before? He’s not trustworthy. He never has been. He never will be, he bets.

Ender.

Ranboo lets out a sob, pressing his hands tighter to his face. He wants to be able to hug Tubbo. He wants to be able to comfort him, to reassure him he’s home, to make him feel *safe*, again. He looked so *scared*, on screen, and though Ranboo knows that’s likely just acting, he- he can’t help but feel that it’s not.

He can’t even get within five thousand miles of him.

It *hurts*.

Something buzzes beside him, and he swipes at his eyes and goes to check his phone. He sighs, reading the reminder he set for himself to join someone’s stream. He forgot that he agreed to do that. He in no way, shape, or form has the energy to join, but- he can’t just *not*.

Especially when this is his only way to reunite (*unite, for the first time*) with his best friends.

Ranboo forces himself to sit up, to boot up his PC again and prepare for the stream. Ender, he really does *not* want to do this, but he really has no choice.

He really just has no choice.

It hurts.

-

Three hours after Tommy had dashed out of his house, barely a word thrown over his shoulder to his parents, he arrives at Tubbo's house.

He's *so* fucking relieved that he memorized Tubbo's address – he doesn't think he could live with himself if he left Tubbo alone after that fucking stream. He- he can't imagine. Having to relive that, relive the moment Tommy *knows* still haunts him- Tommy can't imagine the pain Tubbo's in right that second.

Tommy reaches under the potted plant to the side of the door, and lets himself into the house. Thankfully, it seems like Tubbo's family is gone, and so he quietly takes his shoes off, and makes his way to where he knows Tubbo's room is.

It's too quiet in the house. It makes Tommy uneasy. Worried.

Fuck, he *knows* Tubbo's not okay. He needs to stop pushing that knowledge away.

He knocks on Tubbo's door. "Tubbo?" he asks softly. "You in there?"

Silence. Tommy's stomach twists, and he knocks one more time. "Tubs- big man, it's Tommy," he tries one more time. No response again. He sighs, and calls out, "I'm coming in, Tubbo," before he lets himself in.

Tubbo's there, curled up on his bed. His back is to the door, arms wrapped around the bee plushie Tommy'd gotten him during their last meetup. If he wasn't so damn worried, Tommy would feel warm.

Instead, he takes a seat next to Tubbo on the bed, resting a gentle hand on his upper back. "Hey, Tubbo," he says quietly, rubbing circles softly into his back. "Hey, how're you doing?"

Tubbo doesn't respond. Tommy feels him tense up below his hand, though, so he knows Tubbo's awake. "You don't need to respond," Tommy murmurs, continuing his soft circles. "Just know I'm here, alright?"

A faint snuffle, then one of Tubbo's hands snakes around to grab at Tommy's. Tommy weaves his fingers through Tubbo's; gives him a faint squeeze. His heart *hurts*- he hates that he can't do more to alleviate his best friend's pain.

They just stay like that, for a while, before Tubbo lets out a shuddering, shaky breath and rolls over. Tommy meets Tubbo's red, watery eyes, giving him a soft smile. "There you are,"

he whispers, giving Tubbo's hand another squeeze.

Tubbo's face crumples, then, and he sits up just enough that Tommy can pull him into a hug as he lets out his first sob. He buries his face in Tommy's collarbone, grasping desperately at his shirt. Tommy brings him as close as he can, arm locked around Tubbo's back and other hand threading gently through his hair.

Trembling, Tubbo nestles against Tommy's chest. He doesn't let out any more sobs, but tears trail steadily down his cheeks. Tommy hates seeing his best friend like this, but it's better than before, when Tubbo would just keep everything inside.

Another thing he's thankful for this second life for- they're both allowed to be emotionally vulnerable, here. It's a kindness neither of them had ever been allowed before.

"Let it out," Tommy whispers, stroking Tubbo's hair. "Let it out, I'm right here. I'm here."

Tubbo just...cries against Tommy, for a while. Tommy eventually leans his own head against Tubbo's, letting all the stress, all the pain and hurt that today brought back, leech out of him. He can tell he starts crying at some point, too, but Tubbo doesn't mention it.

They've always known exactly what the other needed.

Tubbo leans back eventually, sniffing and scrubbing at his eyes. Tommy just readjusts, keeping Tubbo leaned against him and giving him time to collect himself. "...Thanks," Tubbo finally whispers, voice still wavering but thankfully not entirely wet, anymore.

"Don't thank me," Tommy immediately shoots back. He gives Tubbo a soft grin. "I'll always be here- don't thank me for that, not when you'd do the same."

Tubbo doesn't laugh, really, but he lets out an amused exhale. That's the most Tommy could hope for. "I fucking hate this, man," Tubbo mutters, leaning his head back against Tommy's chest. He looks exhausted. Tommy can't blame him.

"I know," he murmurs, thumb absently rubbing circles into Tubbo's thigh. "I know."

"And we can't even *back* out of it," Tubbo continues, frustrated. Tommy winces.

"We could-"

"Not without risking everything," Tubbo cuts in, and Tommy sighs, defeated.

"Yeah. Yeah, I know."

The silence hangs heavy between them, for a moment. Then:

"How're *you* doing?" Tubbo asks quietly. Tommy frowns a bit.

"What do you mean?"

Tubbo tilts his head upwards to give Tommy a look. “The pit,” Tubbo reminds him, and Tommy stiffens up. Right. That also happened today.

“I’m...alright,” Tommy finally decides on. His chest feels tight, his shoulders far too tense. But...as cheesy as it is, just being around Tubbo has helped. He’s always had that effect.

Tubbo places a hand on Tommy’s thigh and rubs small circles in with his thumb. “You sure?” he asks sincerely. Tubbo’s always so genuine with his concern. If Tommy hadn’t already cried today, he probably would’ve started again at that question.

He pulls Tubbo a little closer, lays his head on top of his, and confirms, “Yeah, I’m sure.”

He’ll have to go home eventually. He’ll probably get slammed with nightmares, then, and have to call Tubbo to help him feel better. Likewise, Tubbo probably will have had nightmares of his own. But they’re together, now. They’re safe. They know that Wilbur loves them, and Techno’s protective of them, and even Schlatt wants nothing but the best for them. It’s weird, but- they’re safe. They’re safe, and that safety isn’t going anywhere.

It helps.

Chapter End Notes

:)

thank you so much for reading!! next chapter has another of my favorite scenes :D

till next time <3

finally united

Chapter Summary

“Was that fucking *Ranboo*?!” he asks, voice high-pitched like it gets when Tommy’s truly hysteric. Tubbo nods rapidly.

“I think it was,” he says, blinking rapidly as the implications finally hit him. Tommy lets out a choked laugh. Tubbo repeats, voice gone breathy with shock, “I think it was.”

“And you *blocked* him?!” Tommy asks incredulously. “Are you serious?!”

“*Listen*-” Tubbo protests, “I panicked, okay?!”

“And your first response was to *block* him? Why?”

“Listen, you remember that pun he used to make with his name all the time? He made it again! It was an instinctual response!”

Chapter Notes

i'm sorry plant you wouldn't fuckin wake UP

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“*Phil*, Wilbur’s bullying me.”

Tommy joins Phil’s stream, whining, and grins at the sigh Phil lets out in response. Phil starts asking, “What the fuck is happening now-” but Wilbur joins a couple seconds later, cutting him off.

“Phil, don’t listen to anything the gremlin child says,” Wilbur demands. Tommy lets out an offended gasp as a third ping sounds.

“I have done *nothing* wrong!”

“You’re a liar,” Tubbo chirps, announcing his presence to the stream. Tommy rears back as if struck. He’s glad he’s not streaming; his grin is far too wide to sell the bit, right now.

Tommy protests, “But *Tubbo*, he deserved it!”

Tubbo ignores Tommy and informs Phil, “Tommy followed Wilbur while he was mining and kept on imitating creeper sounds behind him. Wilbur, sick of it, started killing Tommy whenever he got close. Tommy took offense, and- well, you know.”

Pouting at both the explanation and the laugh Phil lets out, Tommy slouches back in his seat. “He deserved it,” Tommy says mulishly. He glances at Phil’s facecam, and- yup, he’s raising his eyebrows.

“Uh-huh,” Phil says doubtfully. “What exactly did Wilbur do to deserve you being a little shit behind him?”

Tommy sits up again, and exclaims, “He wouldn’t let me steal his hoodie!”

Phil blinks. “Which hoodie?”

“*The* hoodie!”

“...You mean the one you kept trying to steal during the meetup? Which was...over two months ago?”

Tommy nods. “Yup!”

Rubbing the bridge of his nose, Phil asks, “...And why are you getting your revenge this late afterwards?”

“Because he’s a little shit who would take any opportunity to ruin my day,” Wilbur deadpans. It’s mostly fond, with a little annoyance threaded through, so Tommy just grins brighter.

Tommy answers again, “Because he deserved it!”

Phil sighs, “Gremlin. Tubbo, you’re my favorite.”

Tommy’s whine of “*Why?*” gets drowned out by Tubbo’s laugh and crow of, “Ha! Suck it, Tommy!”

“Fuck off, Tubbo,” he grumbles, crossing his arms. “I hate all of you. Everyone. Everyone on this earth sucks. Fuck you.” Of course, that’s when another person decides to join the call. Even before they speak, Tommy knows who it is.

“Even me, Tommy?” Techno asks, clearly amused. Tommy rolls his eyes.

“I *suppose* not, Tech-no-blade.”

“Yay,” Techno drawls.

Tommy gives his camera a look. “You could not have sounded *any* less excited.”

“Hmm. I bet I could. Want me to try again?”

“Be my guest,” Tommy deadpans. He chances a glance at chat, and predictably, they’re all losing their minds. 5/5, they’re screaming, and Tommy can’t help but laugh.

It’s nice, having completely chaotic moments like this. It calms him. Grounds him. Reminds him that his past *is* firmly in the past, no matter how much the Dream SMP storyline wants to drag it all back. He’s fine, and he’s loved, and he’s safe.

He needs that reminder a little more now. He’s glad he’s got it.

“Anyway, Phil,” Tommy cuts in, completely interrupting whatever conversation had been happening. He’s sure it wasn’t too important. “Wanna hear about this epic prank idea me and Tubbo have?”

Phil groans, “Oh no,” while the others just sigh. Tubbo laughs excitedly, though, and so Tommy continues on.

“So, it starts with a *really* big bowling pin...”

-

Tubbo’s streaming, as he does, when the mediashare that comes *far* too close to giving him a heart attack comes on.

He doesn’t often do mediashare streams, but it’s been a while since the last one he did, so Tubbo decided, *why not?*

His chat’s definitely happy about it; they’ve been sending in stupid stuff this whole time, and while Tubbo has laughed sometimes, that’s more due to his lack of control than the talent of chat. There’s some moments when Tommy sends stuff in, though, and that’s when he truly loses his shit. Tommy’s far too aware of his sense of humor. It’s really not fair.

He’s just playing Minecraft on the Dream SMP – and it’s nice, being able to play on this server without having to worry about playing out his *life* sometimes – when a mediashare comes on. And-

“Whoops- almost missed that jump, there. That would’ve been bad.”

Tubbo freezes.

That’s- he knows that voice. He *knows that voice*.

Is that- is it *Ranboo*?

Tubbo asks blankly, “Is that *Ranboo*?” Never mind that he’s never heard of a content creator named Ranboo before, never mind that Ranboo doesn’t have his facecam on and Tubbo has no way of verifying that it is indeed him that’s talking, never mind that Tubbo hasn’t heard his voice in *decades*-

“Chat, please stop encouraging me to jump into the void. It’s not going to happen.”

He knows that voice. And-

Ranboo says something more – Tubbo isn't entirely sure, his breathing's picked up, his blood rushing through his ears – but then Tubbo catches him say at the end, "You've been Ramboozled."

And-

Tubbo just shakes his head, eyes going wide. He's still streaming, he has to remind himself. He's still streaming, he has to play this off. He has to play off hearing the voice of one of his best friends for the first time in *far* too long, has to play off hearing the *same fucking joke* he's heard *so many fucking times before*-

And suddenly, Tubbo knows what he needs to do.

"Alright, chat- one second, there's something I need to do." Tubbo forces himself to remain calm, and tabs over to Ranboo's twitter, and blocks him without hesitation. Which- look, he knows he probably shouldn't block who might be his husband, but he's panicking and that pun is one that Ranboo used to make *constantly*.

He thinks he's allowed to do this.

After the stream, Tommy facetimes him. "Was that fucking *Ranboo?!?*" he asks, voice high-pitched like it gets when Tommy's truly hysteric. Tubbo nods rapidly.

"I think it was," he says, blinking rapidly as the implications finally hit him. Tommy lets out a choked laugh. Tubbo repeats, voice gone breathy with shock, "I think it was."

"And you *blocked* him?!" Tommy asks incredulously. "Are you serious?!"

"*Listen-*" Tubbo protests, "I panicked, okay?!"

"And your first response was to *block* him? Why?"

"Listen, you remember that pun he used to make with his name all the time? He made it again! It was an instinctual response!"

"Yeah, okay, fine, but it's still *Ranboo!*"

Tubbo laughs hysterically, tears starting to stream down his cheeks. "I'll unblock him, leave me alone!"

"You'd better!"

(An ocean away, Ranboo checks the trending tab after he wakes up and, upon seeing the clip of Tubbo blocking him, laughs out loud. "Typical," he mutters under his breath, smiling and wiping a tear out from under his eye.

Looks like the more things change, the more they stay the same.)

There's nothing but choked laughter that quickly turns into crying, for a moment. Tubbo, having unblocked Ranboo, whispers, "We found him."

Ranboo, Tubbo's minutes-man turned best friend turned husband; the man who makes Tubbo smile just as easily as Tommy can make him laugh; the man who Tubbo adopted Michael with and who cooked with him and who made Tubbo believe life *could* be good again.

The man who...who kept Tubbo alive, after. Who made sure Tubbo ate, and did his best to make him sleep, and took care of him. Who *loved* him, despite everything that makes Tubbo so very hard to love.

Tubbo *missed* him. Even having not met him yet, even not knowing whether this is really *Ranboo*, something...something heals, within him.

Tommy lets out a breath, bringing Tubbo out of his thoughts. He scrubs at his eyes, giving Tubbo a watery smile, and says, "We did find him." He pauses for a moment. "Well, more like he was shoved at us and we had to notice."

Tubbo snorts, swiping at his own eyes. "Yeah."

A silence. "What do we do now?" Tommy asks, hushed. Tubbo shrugs slightly.

"We have to reach out," Tubbo says. Tommy wrinkles his eyes.

"Well, duh, of course we do," he scoffs. His tone softens slightly. "We have to know."

"Yeah," Tubbo agrees. "Yeah, we do." He's quiet for a bit. "I'll find his discord and reach out to him tomorrow," he decides. Tommy nods.

"Sounds like a good plan. Send me his discord, too," he says. He then gives Tubbo a huge, heartbreakingly hopeful grin. "We *found him*, Tubbo," he whispers, and Tubbo laughs, wiping away a few of his own tears.

"We did," he breathes back, leaning back in his chair. It's like a weight he didn't even know existed vanishes from his shoulders. He repeats, "We did."

As promised, the next day, he reaches out to Ranboo.

Ranboo responds, and just like with Tommy, it's like a little bit of Tubbo comes home.

After that first conversation with Ranboo, Tubbo makes plans to talk to him a lot more. He has it all planned out – he'll DM Ranboo, spam him if he must, make Ranboo get closer to him, they'll start calling, and suddenly they'll be best friends again. He can find out if Ranboo's *their* Ranboo. It'll be good.

Unfortunately, the sixteenth is rapidly approaching.

And Tubbo finds his attention is ripped violently away from possibly reuniting with his best friend.

-

The sixteenth dawns like any other day.

Tommy wakes up in his bed, and just...stares at the ceiling, for a while. He's known this day was coming- known for quite a while, honestly. He and Tubbo had talked for hours, last night, reassuring each other, and distracting each other when all that could be talked about for the sixteenth had been said.

Still, Tommy wakes up, and the last thing he wants to do is get out of bed.

Sadly, he has to, so he groans and forces himself up. He brushes his teeth, and makes breakfast, and greets his parents, just like any other day. But, when he plops down into his desk chair, he stalls, just for a moment.

He can't make himself log on. He has to log on. He *really* doesn't want to. He has to. He doesn't want to.

He really does have to, and so he sighs and gets it over with.

Instantly, as soon as he comes online, Wilbur's calling him. "Tommy," he cheers, and even though Tommy feels absolutely miserable, something in him relaxes.

"Hey, Big Dubs," Tommy greets. He turns on his own camera when Wilbur does, meeting Wilbur's excited grin with his own faint smile.

"You ready for today, Tommy?" Wilbur asks. Tommy nods.

"Ready as ever, big man," he reassures, logging onto the SMP and getting his bearings. He glances over to see Wilbur nod in satisfaction. He's dressed in his "evil" getup. Tommy doesn't like it. He's going to die again today. Tommy *hates* it.

"Alright, let's do this," Wilbur says. He pauses, for a moment, then says quietly, "Tommy."

Tommy glances up, forcing his hands to come unclenched. "Wilbur?"

Wilbur sighs slightly. "Toms, remember that none of this is real, okay?" he says gently.

Tommy frowns. "I *know* that, Wilbur, I'm not a child."

"I know you're not! I just-" Wilbur exhales, before he leans forward towards the screen. His eyes are so very soft. "Just remember how much I love you, okay?" he murmurs. "None of this – me brushing you off, me treating you like shit – absolutely *none* of it has any bearing on our actual relationship. You're my little brother above all, alright?"

Blinking rapidly, Tommy stops himself from starting to cry with sheer force of will. "I know, Wil," Tommy agrees quietly. "I'll remember."

Wilbur leans back, a small smile forming on his face. Tommy could *cry* at how fond it is. "Alright," he says, before he grins.

“Let’s get this show on the road, then!”

-

The sixteenth, predictably, sucks.

Tubbo didn’t really expect much less. Like last time, Techno leads them to his bunker, making a grand show of it. Unlike last time, though, Tubbo allows himself to have a little fun with it, grabbing all the emeralds he can feasibly carry in his inventory and stashing them away. He did that last time, too, but this time, it’s out of a sense of joy, not because of his never-ending need to be prepared for everything.

The war’s easier, this time, for sure. Tubbo can’t feel any of the pain, and though he winces sometimes as a few fireworks hit too close to him, even though he can’t help but flinch at the loud noises, it’s...better. It’s less real. Easier to deal with.

It helps, too, that Tommy keeps on muttering, “Tubbo, stay close,” reassuring him that he’s not alone.

Before he knows it, they’re watching Schlatt die. Tubbo mostly feels numb- it took so much longer than just an hour, last time. It was multiple days of fighting, of dying, of healing injuries and drinking far too many potions and suffering through sheer bloodshed. It was so, so much pain.

So much sacrifice went into winning their home back, only for it all to be blown up anyway.

Schlatt’s dead now, though. Schlatt’s dead, and Tubbo’s watching Tommy be put on the podium. He knows how it’s going to go and that Tommy’s going to decline it, but he still can’t help but feel fiercely, overwhelmingly proud of his best friend.

Tommy, in both lives, deserves this sort of recognition. He doesn’t deserve to deal with the horrors that the Presidential role deals, but the validation, the confirmation that he did *good*- that’s something that he’s earned.

It hurts hearing Wilbur call his own name. It hurts, thinking of what’s going to happen now, and what this position caused him to do in the future.

“Dream, I’ve come to the decision that the thing that is best for this nation, the most logical thing to do, is for Tommy to be...exiled.”

He *really* hopes he doesn’t have to act out that moment again.

The rest of the stream seems to flash by. He’s not quite sure how or why. It doesn’t make it hurt any less, being held hostage by Technoblade again; seeing the country (*his* country) get blown to smithereens again; hearing Tommy’s cries as Wilbur dies *again*. It really, really doesn’t help.

What does help, though, is that in the end, they log off the SMP. Their streams end. Tommy, Tubbo, Wilbur, Phil, Techno- they all hang around on call for *hours* after.

Wilbur's still alive, gushing praise and excitedly talking about how well everyone did. Techno returns back to his sarcastic, yet gruffly caring self. Phil checks in and makes sure everyone's feeling alright after that intense of a stream. Tommy starts laughing again within minutes, quickly swiping his tears away, and Tubbo feels his shoulders loosen. He starts to grin, too.

And Tubbo *knows* that he does have a home, after all, to help with the hole in his chest that's just barely started healing.

-

"Tommy- Tommy, knock it *off*-"

Tommy laughs, the sound coming out garbled. "What, you don't want me using this super fun voice mod on your stream, Phil?" He asks innocently, turning up the effect as he talks.

Phil lets out a loud groan, and Tommy stifles a snicker. "*Yes*, you little shit," Phil says exasperatedly. Tommy hums thoughtfully.

"I dunno, Phil, this is rather fun." Phil sighs. When Tommy glances over to Phil's stream, he looks so completely done with everything.

He says deadpan, "Tommy, I will mute you."

Tommy gasps. "*You wouldn't!*" He yells, mock offended.

"I will," Phil threatens. Tommy knows he's not serious.

"Ugh, *fine*, I'll just go to bother Wil, then."

"Good. Begone, gremlin child."

"Bye, Phil!" Tommy says cheerfully, then jumps to call Wilbur. Predictably, he picks up almost immediately.

"Have enough of fucking with Phil?" Wilbur asks in amusement. Tommy finally lets his snickers out.

He says cheekily, "His old man bones couldn't take too much more harassment. I had to let him go at some point!"

Wilbur turns on his camera, shaking his head in the same instant. "You're impossible," he says. There's a fond smile tugging at his lips, though, so Tommy just grins.

"I know!"

"Chaotic child."

"Old man."

“Wha- I’m *twenty-four*, use that line with Phil!”

Tommy just shrugs, grinning even larger. “You’re both old,” he says unashamedly.

“Little shit.” Wilbur glances to the side, then, and a considering frown tugs at his lips. “Huh,” he says, exasperated tone lost. He clicks on something and types for a moment. “Looks like Dream’s adding someone else to the SMP.”

Tommy blinks. “Huh,” he echoes. “Who is it?”

“This kid named Ranboo?” Wilbur says *entirely* too casually, considering the way Tommy’s brain has just short-circuited.

Tommy manages to force out a strangled, “Who?”

Wilbur hums. “He’s this relatively new streamer- around your age, actually. You guys would probably get along.”

Nodding his head, Tommy manages to adopt a smile. He has no clue how fake it looks. “Oh- sorry, Wil, I’ve gotta go!” Tommy says. Wilbur looks up, startled.

“That’s- okay, Tommy, see you later?”

“Yup!” Tommy chirps, before he leaves the call and scrambles for his phone, facetimeing Tubbo within seconds.

Tubbo picks up, and Tommy gives him no time to speak. “Ranboo’s being added to the SMP,” Tommy says in a breath. It’s then that he realizes just how fast his breathing is – he forces himself to take in a couple of deep breaths and slow it back down.

“*What?!*” Tubbo yells, eyes wide.

“*Yeah!*”

“Right- right now?!”

“Apparently!”

Tubbo breathes in shakily, closing his eyes. “Okay,” he says, forcefully calm. Tommy frowns – he always hates when Tubbo pushes everything down like this. “I hadn’t- okay. Okay.”

Tommy gives him a couple of moments to collect his thoughts before he says lightly, “Tubs, tell me that’s going on in that brain of yours.”

Blinking, Tubbo shakes his head. “Right, sorry,” he says. He’s silent for a moment. “I’ve barely even been able to talk to him over DM,” he says in a low tone. Tommy blinks as well, before he curses.

“We completely forgot to keep reaching out to him, huh,” Tommy mumbles, shoulders slumping. They’d really heard about him, then just...not reached out. They really are shitty

friends, aren't they.

Tubbo nods slightly. "The sixteenth kinda took all our energy, huh," Tubbo says wryly. Tommy lets out a bit of a laugh.

"Yeah, apparently." Plus, Tommy can't help but think, a part of him had been...had been afraid of reaching out.

Tommy'd taken the time to watch a couple of Ranboo's streams in between- well, everything. Ranboo's so *similar*; his voice, always so comforting, is almost exactly the same, just missing that Enderian rasp that he'd never really managed to shake entirely. His laugh's exactly the same, his nervous stuttering and concentrated mutterings so entirely *him* that even though he looks *so* different in this life, Tommy has no doubt that it's him- or a version of him, at least.

Ranboo looks happy. Tommy's- Tommy's so glad, for that.

But he couldn't help but worry, couldn't help but think- what if Ranboo isn't the same? What if he doesn't end up liking them- or, more likely, not liking Tommy? Tubbo's nice and friendly; he could be friends with anyone. Tommy's loud and abrasive and not fun. He's annoying and he's aware of it. And...the thought of one of his best friends disliking him... Tommy can't handle it.

Looks like he doesn't get a choice in confronting it now, though.

"...I'm gonna go ahead and join," Tommy says. Tubbo smiles a bit and nods.

"Don't be nervous!" Tubbo says brightly, because at the end of the day he still knows Tommy better than he knows himself. "Just be yourself. Ranboo – any version of him – will love you."

Tommy lets out a halted laugh. "Tell that to yourself, Tubso," he teases lightly. He lets his tone grow a little more serious, then, and says, "I'll see you later."

"See you later." Tommy ends the call, takes in a deep breath, and steels himself.

And he joins the game.

-

Ranboo is in *way* over his head.

When he'd started his stream today – jokingly running as President of the Dream SMP, of all things – he never in a *thousand* years would've expected this. Philza raiding him. Fundy raiding him. Him jumping tens of thousands of viewers within seconds. Niki joining the call was something that he could've expected at least a *little* bit – they've been friends for a few weeks, and she's just as kind to him in this life as she had been in the last.

(He can't be sure that it *isn't* the Niki from before, but she seems happier; seems lighter than she ever was before. He's glad. He's so glad she's happy.

Niki's always deserved happiness, in this life and the last.)

But then, when he gets a DM from *Dream*, of all people, inviting him onto the Dream SMP, well- he's in shock, to say the least. He manages to play it off, thankfully, calming his nerves from talking to *Dream*, of all people. Niki knows, of course, that he's been invited, but plays along with the bit, and before he knows it he's on the Dream SMP.

Huh.

It doesn't *quite* sink in right away, as he keeps on playing and streaming, shoving his instinctual fear of Dream down deep. In his head, he knows that this is the server that Tommy and Tubbo spend practically all their time on. But, emotionally speaking, he doesn't know until, well-

Until Tommy's logged on, and spamming for him to join his voice chat. Ranboo, suddenly, is blinking back tears.

And then Tommy's voice is echoing in his ears, as loud and attention-demanding as ever, and this all becomes *real* to Ranboo. Tommy's here. He's talking to Ranboo, yelling at Ranboo, and Ranboo can't help but take in a shuddering breath and just hope that the mic hadn't picked it up.

A couple of weeks ago, Tubbo had reached out to Ranboo. Ranboo...Ranboo really didn't know what to do, then. He's wanted that for so, so long, but as soon as he'd seen the little icon pop up, it's like his brain had short-circuited.

It was Tubbo, but at the same time, Ranboo couldn't help but fear that it wasn't a version of Tubbo that would *want* to be his friend. He was scared that Tubbo would see him and find him lacking. That he wasn't good enough, that he'd lose his best friend upon uniting with him again. Same with Tommy.

The two were always so *happy*, together. Ranboo didn't want to ruin that.

So, when the DMs from Tubbo dwindled down into nothing a couple of days later, Ranboo just let it happen.

Seems he's not getting a choice about avoiding them, now.

Tommy's voice rips him back to the present. "Ranboo, how old are you?" Tommy asks, in a low, intense voice. Ranboo blinks, half to force back tears and half in surprise. His expression melts into fond exasperation soon enough, though.

Of course Tommy's first question upon them meeting would be seeing if he's still the youngest. That's such a *Tommy* thing to do. "I'm a minor, and that's all I'm going to say," Ranboo answers, half because that's the truth and all he's comfortable saying, and half to mess with Tommy.

Predictably, Tommy shouts in indignation immediately, before pausing figuring out another way to phrase the question. When Ranboo's answer is that he is once again older, Tommy's

yell of frustration is such a *Tommy* way to react that it has him laughing once again.

Ender, Ranboo *missed* him. Tommy always managed to figure out a way to lighten the mood, even at the expense of himself. Ranboo's glad that hasn't changed.

Ranboo's a little disappointed when Tommy leaves the call, but it's not surprising – he probably has other things to be doing. Plus, that *was* the most funny way they could've been introduced.

Still, Ranboo's longed for his best friend for so long. Hopefully they'll be able to talk more later.

Later on, Tubbo joins the call, and it feels the exact same. He teases Ranboo, unsurprisingly, but he sounds so *genuinely* happy when he congratulates Ranboo on joining the SMP. He sounds so thrilled that Ranboo's here, and it almost makes Ranboo tear up again.

Jeez, he's glad he's a faceless streamer. He'd be a mess if he had a facecam on right then.

Well, not that he isn't a mess anyway, but still.

Tubbo also leaves the call fairly quickly. Ranboo has to fight hard to not be disheartened, but Tubbo's promise to take him on a tour the next day to show him around the SMP makes him feel better. Tubbo probably also has things to do – he's not just trying to avoid Ranboo. And, when Tubbo messages him a few minutes later asking if he wants to hang out on call with him and Tommy after stream, it makes him feel even better. Honestly, he'd prefer to talk to them off-stream, anyway.

The knot of anxiety doesn't leave him, though. He can't say he expected it to.

But, still, something in him eases. He's talked to his (*former*) best friends. They're here. They're alive, and happy, and he can *talk* to them now.

It's enough.

-

The next day comes, and Ranboo's even more nervous and excited than he was before.

Yesterday, after stream, the call had been...nice. Ranboo doesn't know if he was just too anxious, or if the others were just too standoffish, but it hadn't felt natural. The conversation felt stilted. Awkward. Ranboo's heart had sunk, just a bit, at the further confirmation that these two likely aren't *his* best friends.

Yet, today, it ends up feeling completely different.

Tubbo calls him as soon as he pops online. Ranboo, startled, answers it.

“Hey, big man!” He chirps. Ranboo winces – he's still waking up, but of course Tubbo's energetic, it's almost five in the afternoon for him. It'd be surprising if he wasn't fully awake.

Ranboo replies, “Hi, Tubbo.”

“You ready for today?” It sounds like Tubbo’s knuckles crack, and Ranboo chuckles.

He says dryly, “I mean, yeah. Should I be worried that you sound like you’re preparing for a fight?”

“Don’t worry about it!” Tubbo brushes off, and Ranboo laughs again.

“You do know that *really* doesn’t help, right?”

“Don’t worry about it!” Tubbo repeats brightly.

“*Okay* then.”

Slowly, Ranboo relaxes. This- *this* conversation feels normal. It feels natural. It feels like they’re back in Snowchester, Michael running circles around them while Tubbo and Ranboo are bantering. The only thing missing is Tommy chiming in with some teasing comment or just watching them fondly.

Ranboo’s heart pangs.

He doesn’t miss the danger of that world, but he misses those simple days, sometimes.

Even when Ranboo starts streaming, the feeling stays the exact same. He and Tubbo bounce off of each other like it hasn’t been over eighty years since Ranboo last talked to his husband. Even when Tubbo *isn’t* the Tubbo that Ranboo vowed to spend his life with, it feels the exact same.

More than a few times, Tubbo makes an offhand comment or gets excited about something that’s so *similar* to his past self that Ranboo has to take a few deep breaths to stop himself from crying. Ender, he missed this *so* much.

He’s been so, so lonely, but finally that hole inside him seems to be filling, if only a little bit.

They spend a few hours together, before Tubbo tells him regretfully that he has to go. “We’ll talk soon, alright, big man?” Tubbo says hopefully right before he leaves. Ranboo smiles fondly.

“Yeah, talk to you soon, Tubbo. Later.”

“Bye!”

Ranboo doesn’t even have a chance to feel lonely before Tommy’s calling him. “Ranboo!” He cheers. “What is *up!*”

Laughing, Ranboo answers, “Hi, Tommy.”

And it’s the exact same as with Tubbo. Something must’ve been bugging Tommy the night before, because Tommy and Ranboo fall easily into their almost-mean banter; Tommy

complains about his status as the youngest on the server, Ranboo teases him mercilessly. As an attempt to retaliate, Tommy asks about how tall Ranboo is.

Ranboo stares at the screen, deadpan. “Do you really want to know the answer to that?” Ranboo asks flatly, because he’s seen Tommy’s height. He knows Ranboo’s answer is not going to make Tommy happy.

“Yes, I *do*, Ranboob, don’t patronize me,” Tommy snaps back, and Ranboo sighs in despair. How has Tommy *already* picked up on that nickname? Is he just cursed?

“Fine, *Thomas*,” he responds mockingly, grinning at the noise of outrage Tommy makes. “I’m six foot six.”

A pause. “You’re lying,” Tommy says.

“I’m not.”

“Well, then, you’re just wrong.”

“I’m not wrong, actually.” Ranboo’s smile grows a bit of a mocking edge, and he teases, “What, you insecure about being short?”

“I am *not short!*” Tommy instantly replies in a yell, and Ranboo laughs.

“Sure you aren’t, shortie.”

“Shut the fuck *up!*”

“Nah, I don’t think I will, actually.”

The call continues along that vein for the next however long, and Ranboo can’t stop grinning. He hasn’t had this much fun in *ages*. He knew he missed this – knew he missed the companionship and family that no one but these two have ever been able to give him – but he didn’t realize just how *much* he missed it until now.

Ender. He can feel himself starting to love these two already, even if they aren’t *his* chaotic best friends.

It’s getting close to the five hour mark of Ranboo’s stream – Tommy muted briefly to start his own stream, but he’s back again – when Ranboo comes across a patch of alliums.

He pauses, something soft settling in his heart.

Despite the fact that at this point, it’s been over eighty years since Ranboo had last interacted with Tommy, he never forgot what brought them together in the first place. Alliums were always *their* thing, Ranboo and Tommy, and Ranboo never forgot. Every chance he got, either in-game or even in real life, he’d try to collect as many alliums as he can. He never gave them to anyone, just keeping them for himself.

He doesn't change his habits now, collecting more than a few alliums and storing them safely away in his inventory.

This time, though, when he and Tommy reunite again, he pulls one out and places it in his hotbar, hiding it from Tommy's view for now. He can see his chat has noticed, though, speeding up with curious questions. He hasn't hidden the fact that he collects alliums, and, likewise, hasn't hidden the fact that he doesn't give them to anyone.

Even when people ask, he always says no. Even when *Tubbo* asked yesterday during stream, Ranboo'd simply smiled and said, "Sorry, these are special."

He hadn't elaborated. Tubbo hadn't asked him to.

Ranboo shakes himself out of his memories, clearing his throat. "Hey, uh, Tommy," Ranboo starts.

Tommy makes a little questioning noise. His character turns to face Ranboo's, and Ranboo can almost *see* the little questioning tilt of his head he always does when he's confused. Ranboo opens his mouth, but...nothing comes out. Emotion knots in his throat.

He's silent for a couple of moments, but eventually he just hovers his mouse over the allium. "For you," he says simply, and throws it to Tommy.

Tommy goes quiet. His head in-game tilts to look at the allium, and there's just...no reaction. Ranboo takes in a deep, shuddering breath. Lets it out. Tommy doesn't make another sound, until Ranboo hears a faint, almost inaudible exhale.

Unable to handle the burning curiosity; the desperate need to *know* that's clenched around his heart right that second, Ranboo opens Tommy's stream on his second monitor. Tommy's facecam is still on, thankfully.

Tommy looks happy, is the first thing Ranboo notices. He's still staring at the screen, a small smile tugging at his lips. But, more than that, he looks *soft*. A hand has made its way to his shirt, clutching over his heart, so much emotion swimming in his eyes that Ranboo can't even hope to name it all.

Finally, he whispers, "Thanks, Ranboo." It comes out choked.

At that same second, Tubbo messages Ranboo, *hey, big man, can you stick around on call for a bit after stream?*

And suddenly, like a bolt of lightning, Ranboo thinks he knows what's going on. He doesn't know *what* sort of expression he's got on his face, but if it's even a sliver as emotional as he feels right that second, he must look like an absolute disaster.

"Of course," Ranboo responds, smile almost splitting his face, his hope almost too much to bear. He answers Tubbo with the same thing, and starts wrapping up his stream soon after.

He needs to be *off* this stream as quickly as possible, or he might actually die. Because- if it's them, if it's *them*, all Ranboo's done will have been worth it.

Tommy seems to have the same idea, wrapping up his stream at the same time. Twitter is probably going crazy, wondering just what happened that they're not getting. Ranboo has no plans on helping them figure it out.

Instead, he ends stream, sending them off to Phil, and waits for Tommy to finish his own stream.

-

Tommy stares at the allium in his hand, and tries not to cry.

It's- it's their flower. It's their flower, and Ranboo just *gave* it to him, and Tommy's live in front of a couple hundred thousand viewers, and he's on the verge of tears. Again.

This time, it's for a good reason, so Tommy can barely be bothered to control it at all. He tries to end his stream as quickly as possible, and Tubbo tells him to let him into the call as soon as they've both ended. He must've been watching, too, then. Tommy isn't surprised.

It's silent, when Tommy undeafens and Tubbo joins the call. Ranboo's clearly unmuted and undeafened, but still, none of them speak. Tommy can't bring himself to either, and just stares at the allium in his inventory again.

Finally, Ranboo whispers, quiet and nervous and so entirely *him*, "...Hey, guys."

Tommy chokes on a sob. He sounds *exactly* the same.

His hopes are getting uncontrollably high; he can't bring himself to shove them down deep. He lets out a quiet, hopeful whisper of, "...*Ran?*" The nickname slips out, easy and natural.

Tubbo breathes at the same time, "Boo...Boo, is that you?"

Ranboo doesn't respond for a while, but the hitched exhale that comes through instead is almost answer enough. Ranboo laughs haltingly, and when he answers, his voice sounds wet. "...Yeah, I think- I think so, Bee."

Tommy's eyes burn with tears; Tubbo lets out a gasp and Tommy knows he's just one more push away from breaking down sobbing.

"I think so," Ranboo repeats shakily, and that ends up being the final straw.

Tommy lets out a sob, tears streaming down his cheeks, and the other two are quick to follow.

"You're *here*," Ranboo chokes out. Tommy presses the palms of his hands into his eyes, hunching over and sobbing.

Ranboo's back. Ranboo's *here*, and they're together, and Tommy's feels complete, for the first time since he woke up in this world.

Tubbo replies wetly, "Yeah." Tommy can hear the happiness in his words, and his own joy threatens to overwhelm him. "Yeah, we're all here."

Ranboo snuffles, and he asks carefully, “Everyone?”

Tommy shakes his head, knowing what he’s asking. “No, just us, big man,” he whispers. Ranboo sobs again.

“Of course, it’s you two,” Ranboo says, and Tommy has no idea what Ranboo looks like, but he’d bet that he’s smiling right then. “It always been you two.”

Emotion lodges in Tommy’s throat, just then, and before he knows it they’ve all started sobbing again.

Ender, Tommy wishes he could hug him. He wishes he could hug them both, that they could all be *together*, and Tommy could finally feel fully at home again. Because his home has always been with Tubbo and Ranboo, and now that he’s got them again, at least in some way, and something settles in his chest.

“I love you both,” Tommy chokes out, completely out of the blue.

Tubbo lets out an affectionate laugh through his own sobs and Ranboo says, voice choked with tears, “I love you, too. Both of you. So, so much.”

“Love you guys,” Tubbo says wetly.

They’re all quiet, for a moment, but then Ranboo speaks up. Tommy’s heart *clenches* at the heartbreak in Ranboo’s voice when he whispers, “I missed you *so much*. ”

“We missed you too, Boo,” Tubbo murmurs. “It was never right without you.”

Tommy nods despite them not being able to see him, and echoes, “Missed you, Ran.” A pause. “I’m so glad you’re here,” he breathes out. Ranboo lets out a choked laugh.

“Me too,” he replies. “Me too.”

They just...exist, for a while. Tommy finally gains control of his breathing, and instead of crying, he just starts grinning. He doesn’t think he’ll ever stop. His best friends are *here*.

Ender. It’s everything he’s ever hoped for.

“We get another chance,” Tubbo breathes after who-knows-how-long, and Tommy sits up straight. An unnamable emotion clutches at his heart, and he can’t breathe for a second.

They get another chance. It’s impossible to comprehend, really- them, three horribly broken kids who were never allowed to truly *live*, before, finally have the chance to. They’re not in danger. They’re protected. They’re cared for. They’re loved.

They *get another chance*.

It’s everything they ever could’ve dreamed of.

“We do,” Tommy says, hushed, and then he laughs. “We *do!*”

“We do,” Ranboo echoes, sounding so happy and so *him* that Tommy’s knocked breathless with the force of his joy.

The rest of the Tommy and Tubbo’s night and into Ranboo’s, they just...talk. For hours and hours and hours, they’re on call, and when they all fall asleep, no one hangs up. They wake up at different times, but none of them ever think to leave the call. Tommy’s so *happy* he could yell for hours.

They eventually have to hang up, but it doesn’t change anything.

Tommy’s finally, finally, *finally* at peace.

Chapter End Notes

:DDDDDDDDDD

the allium thing is one of the earliest concrete things i came up with for this story? like the third or fourth thing i think so i hope you guys enjoyed :D

thanks for reading and cya wednesday <3

a little safer

Chapter Summary

“Ranboo, you *fuck*-”

Ranboo laughs as he hits Tommy off into the void, with Tommy cussing him out, as he does. They’re playing Bedwars for a bit while they wait for Tubbo, and Ranboo’s gotta say, he missed being able to piss Tommy off this much and have Tommy yell at him. ‘Course, it’s a *little* different than before, but it’s just as fun.

“Fuck *off*, Ranboo!”

Maybe even a little more fun.

Chapter Notes

holy shit.

okay. guys, when i published this story, i was like 'okay, hopefully some people like it since my friends seem excited about it' but guys. Guys. this support is fucking INSANE. i'm sorry for not answering the most recent comments - i just got back in school and life is a Lot right now - but all your support means the absolute world to me, and i promise i'll try to answer them soon. thank you. thank you so so much for everything, and i hope you continue to enjoy this story!

now, onto the chapter - this is a little bit of a spoiler, but i felt it important to warn for what this chapter entails. so, content warning for exile-typical thoughts and descriptions of what happened in exile.

alright, that's it! hope you enjoy and thanks again <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Ranboo, you *fuck*-”

Ranboo laughs as he hits Tommy off into the void, with Tommy cussing him out, of course. They’re playing Bedwars for a bit while they wait for Tubbo, and Ranboo’s gotta say, he missed being able to piss Tommy off this much and have Tommy yell at him. ‘Course, it’s a *little* different than before, but it’s just as fun.

“Fuck *off*, Ranboo!”

Maybe even a little more fun.

“Why don’t you just get better?” Ranboo suggests cheekily, leaning back in his chair and grinning at the winning screen in front of him. Tommy groans in his ear, loud and dramatic.

“Why don’t you just get *worse*, Ranboob?”

Ranboo sighs exasperatedly. “Could you not call me that? Maybe? Just maybe?”

“Not after that, bitch.”

“You are just determined to make my life as hard as possible no matter what, huh.”

“Yup!”

Ranboo sighs, but he can’t bring himself to be too annoyed. Ender, he *missed* this so much—missed teasing Tommy and Tommy fighting back and the banter that’s always been so, so easy between them. Tommy’s always been the person who makes Ranboo laugh the easiest, and that hasn’t changed at all.

“I’m gonna beat your ass next time, you dickhead,” Tommy promises, and Ranboo can almost *see* the reluctant grin that’s probably tugging at Tommy’s lips right that moment. Ranboo grins challengingly, heart feeling lighter than ever.

“I’d love to see you try.”

-

“Tubbo- where are you *going*?”

“I saw some bees!” Tubbo says brightly, his character bounding away from Ranboo’s at what feels like the speed of light. Ranboo sighs, but can’t hold back his smile, following after Tubbo.

Ranboo teases, “Still obsessed with bees, huh?”

“Yup!” Tubbo chirps. And then, “Ah! There they are!”

Drawing his character closer, Ranboo shakes his head fondly. “There they are,” he agrees, watching as Tubbo’s character crouches up and down, as if saying hello to the little make-believe creatures on the screen. Tubbo sounds so *happy*- it’s amazing, just how much joy these little pixels can bring Tubbo.

“They’re so *cute*!” Tubbo gasps, looking around at all the bees surrounding him. There are more than a few – Ranboo doesn’t quite know how, but a ton of bees had managed to spawn all in one location, a number of hives surrounding them.

“They are cute,” Ranboo echoes. His heart clenches, warmth and love almost overwhelming him with their strength. Ender, it’s been *so* long since Ranboo’s seen his husband this overwhelmingly happy. It’s hard to handle; his heart feels full enough to explode. Ranboo

suggests, “Wanna bring them back with us? We can make a little bee sanctuary in L’Manberg.”

Tubbo gasps again, his character spinning around to face Ranboo. “Can we?!” He asks excitedly. A fond smile tugs at Ranboo’s lips, and he nods, both in game and in real life.

“Of course we can, Tubbo,” he assures, unable to hold back a laugh at the squeal of joy Tubbo lets out. Tubbo immediately begins slowly luring the bees, careful not to hurt them. Ranboo follows, helping out as well. His smile is too *big* – his cheeks are hurting, and he’s only been interacting with Tubbo for maybe twenty minutes.

Ender. How did he go eighty years without him?

“Ranboo, c’mon!” Tubbo calls, and Ranboo shakes his head, realizing he hadn’t moved in a few seconds. He makes his character follow Tubbo’s.

“Coming, Tubbo.”

-

Ranboo wakes up to the sound of his phone ringing.

Blurily, still half asleep, Ranboo feels around for his phone. Finally finding it, he brings it close to his face and blinks at it. It’s Tommy. Huh. He hadn’t planned on getting a call from Tommy at this hour, but- well, he supposes that’s the reason he put Tommy and Tubbo on his favorites list.

He answers it only a couple rings later, and presses the phone to his ear.

“‘ello?” Ranboo mumbles, head falling back to his pillow. There’s a small, almost inaudible hitch in breath from the other side, and Ranboo’s instantly more alert. “Tommy?” He asks tentatively, after another moment of silence.

Tommy lets out a breath, and responds quietly, “Hi, Ranboo.” Ranboo feels his shoulders relax; he hadn’t even realized they were tense.

Ranboo sits up, asking just as quietly, “What’s wrong, Toms?”

A pause. Ranboo breathes in and out, and forces himself to remain calm as Tommy stays quiet for even longer. Finally, Tommy whispers, “Just needed to hear your voice, I guess.”

“...Oh.” Ranboo slumps against the headboard, something soft and aching both clenching in his chest. A small smile tugs at his lips, and he murmurs, “I promise I’m here, Tommy.”

Ranboo’s had more than a few moments where he’s wondered whether the memory of him reuniting with his friends was real – if it was all a dream. If he was still alone, after all. Figures that Tommy would have the same thoughts.

Tommy scoffs lightly, “I know that, Ranboob.” He’s obviously trying to sound nonchalant, but there’s far too much relief threaded throughout his tone for Ranboo to believe him.

Ranboo lets him off with an amused, “Mhm.” They’re quiet for a moment. He can hear Tommy’s breathing through the phone; he’s sure to emphasize his own breathing in response. Leaning his head back against the headboard, Ranboo closes his eyes.

He never thought he’d ever, *ever* have this back. He’s gonna be sure to soak it up for as long as he can.

“...So, how are you?” Ranboo asks, once the silence starts to feel a little awkward. Tommy huffs out a laugh.

He says dryly, “You really couldn’t’ve come up with a better conversation starter, huh.” Ranboo shrugs, grinning slightly.

“You weren’t carrying the conversation, so someone had to,” Ranboo teases.

“Well, that’s a shit way to start a conversation, innit?”

“We’re talking now, though – isn’t that an improvement?”

“Shut up.”

“No, *you* shut up!”

They’re both silent for a minute, before they both break out into giggles. Ranboo shakes his head, feeling breathless. Ender, his joy is *overwhelming*.

Tommy seems to be thinking along the same lines, mumbling, “I’m really glad you’re back, Ranboo.”

Ranboo smiles a bit wider, heart clenching in a good way, this time.

“I’m glad I am, too.”

-

“Ranboo!”

Ranboo raises his eyebrows as Tubbo joins the call, sounding entirely too mischievous. “Yes, Tubbo?” He asks, slightly suspiciously. Still, though, Ranboo can’t stop himself from smiling at the sound of his voice.

Tubbo turns on his camera, frowning. “Why do you sound so suspicious?” Tubbo pouts. “I just wanted to say hi!”

Ranboo gives Tubbo a look. “I remember that tone of voice. It never meant anything good.”

“Really, though, this time,” Tubbo insists. Ranboo smiles a bit and shakes his head.

“Alright, alright. Hi, Tubbo.”

“Hi!” Tubbo chirps again. “I missed you!”

Ranboo blinks. “We just talked...yesterday. For like, ten hours.”

Tubbo pouts yet again. “Yeah, but that was so *long* ago.” Tubbo looks down, then, and Ranboo has a feeling that if Tubbo were here right now, he’d be scuffing his foot. “These stupid timezones suck.”

Ranboo lets out a breath, suddenly understanding. “Yeah,” Ranboo sighs, his own shoulders dropping a bit. “Yeah, they really do.”

It’s hard, not being able to talk to Tubbo (and Tommy, too) for the whole day like he used to be able to. They’re *so far away*, now; it hurts, a little bit. Especially when Ranboo knows that Tommy and Tubbo can see each other within a few hours – he doesn’t have that option.

He’s happy for them, he really is, but sometimes the loneliness still gnaws at him.

Tubbo shakes his head, forcing a smile on his face. “You’re here now!” Tubbo says brightly, and Ranboo can’t help but smile a bit.

“Yeah,” Ranboo says. “Yeah, I am.”

The call’s quiet, for a moment. Then, Tubbo’s voice comes again. It’s much more subdued than it just was, and Ranboo’s instantly more alert. “Hey, Boo?” Tubbo asks. When Ranboo glances over at him, Tubbo’s head is bowed, shoulders slumped.

“Yeah?” Ranboo prompts after Tubbo doesn’t go any further.

“Was...” Tubbo trails off. “Was Michael...alright, after?”

Oh.

Ranboo’s heart squeezes.

His voice is shaky when he answers. “Yeah,” Ranboo whispers. “He- he missed you a- a lot, and- it wasn’t easy, but...yeah.”

Tubbo finally looks up, eyes shiny. “Good,” Tubbo breathes. He sounds relieved. “That’s... that’s good.”

Ranboo, all of a sudden, wants to cry. “Don’t worry, Tubbo,” he says in an attempt to be reassuring. “He was alright.”

Tubbo laughs wetly. “I’m glad,” he says. He swipes at his tears, shaking his head.

“I’m glad,” he whispers, and Ranboo aches.

-

Tommy might actually cry.

He's- he's been hoping. Despite the fact that every big event from his past life has happened so far, despite the fact that Tommy had absolutely *no* reason to think this way, he's been hoping for so *long* that since no one had brought up Exile, that it may not happen. But-

Looks like he has no fucking choice. Again.

Swiping at his eyes briefly, Tommy pulls up the group chat that he has with Tubbo and Ranboo, and calls them.

"Tommy!" Tubbo cheers, and Tommy suddenly can't breathe through the knot of emotion lodged in his throat. Tubbo sounds so happy. He doesn't- he doesn't want to ruin that. Ranboo joins almost immediately after, and both their faces fall at Tommy's silence.

Gently, Ranboo asks, "Tommy?" Barely probing at all, voice painfully soft, Ranboo continues, "What's wrong?"

Somehow, that's enough to make Tommy let out a whimper and bury his head in his hands, barely taking the time to prop his phone out in front of him.

Both of his best friends let out concerned calls of his name, but Tommy- Tommy can't-

"Tommy, you're safe, right?" Tubbo urges. Tommy nods his head slightly, face still covered by his hands, and takes in a deep breath. Ranboo's not talking, but Tommy can almost *hear* his voice in Tommy's ears as he breathes out slowly. In pattern. It works, slowly, and he finally feels like he can breathe again.

Finally, he lets his shoulders slump and looks up at the screen. They both look pained; he always forgets how much his own pain hurts those who love him, too. "Dream reached out to me, earlier," he whispers. Ranboo's eyebrows narrow, Tubbo's rise. Tommy lets out a shaky breath, and he continues, "He said that he had an idea for the next arc in the story."

Immediately, Tubbo's shoulders tense. "No," he breathes. Tommy shakes his head miserably.

"He- he says that he got the idea from *your* stream, ironically," Tommy continues, shooting a look towards Ranboo. Ranboo's eyes widen, and then his face falls. He looks crushed. Tommy hurries to reassure, "Not that I blame you at all! But..." His hands clench. He bites his lip; the pain grounds him. Keeps him in the moment.

"He told me that it'd be a good way to introduce conflict to our relationship," Tommy whispers, glancing towards Tubbo. He still can't force himself to speak the words aloud. "He said- he said- he said-"

"Toms, breathe," Tubbo tells him quietly, and Tommy realizes with a start that his chest is starting to hurt. He gasps in a breath, suddenly panting. He doesn't know why. He wasn't panicking before.

"In for four," Ranboo breaks in, voice gentle. "Hold for seven- there you go, Tommy, there you go. There you go. Out for eight. Good, go again."

Tommy lets the sound of Ranboo ground him, and closes his eyes, breathing in and out. In and out. In and out.

In and out.

Finally letting out a shuddering breath, Tommy lets himself fall forward and faceplants into his desk. “Why?” He asks miserably. His heart *hurts*. He doesn’t- he doesn’t want to go through this again.

He’s so tired.

Tubbo lets out a sigh. “You know you don’t have to do this, right?” He reminds Tommy, and Tommy sits up, shaking his head and rubbing at his eyes.

“No, I- I have to.” Tubbo narrows his eyes, and Tommy just knows he’s going to argue so he quickly continues, “I can’t tell Dream *no*, not when he’s done so much for us.”

Ranboo breaks in, voice shaky, “Tommy, just because Dream has an *idea* doesn’t mean that you have to accept it! Dream’s nice enough to accept that!”

Tommy’s quiet, for a moment. “I don’t wanna disappoint him,” he admits in a whisper. He wraps his arms around himself, trying desperately to find some comfort. “He’s- this *is* a good storyline, and he sounded so *excited* about it. I don’t wanna ruin this for him.”

Resolve threads through his voice, then, and he says, “I can handle this.”

Tubbo looks unimpressed through his worry. “Tommy, you just had a panic attack at the very thought of Exile happening again.” Tommy forces his breath not to hitch at the mention – Tubbo just manages to look more unimpressed. “You don’t have to sacrifice yourself for the sake of a *good story*.”

“Tommy, *please*,” Ranboo pleads, leaning forward in his own seat. Tommy shakes his head, his resolve strengthening by the minute.

“No, I’m going to do it,” Tommy decides. Dream deserves the best, this time around – ever since Tommy met him, he’s been kind to him, and goofed off with him on stream, and double-checked that any storyline he wants to do won’t make Tommy upset. He’s even said that Tommy doesn’t have to do this if he doesn’t want to, but...

Well, Tommy doesn’t want to, but he will.

Tubbo sighs in frustration. “I really hate your fucking stubbornness, sometimes,” Tubbo states, glaring at Tommy. Ranboo sighs, burying his head in his hands. Tommy ignores Tubbo and frowns at the way Ranboo’s shoulders look weighted down.

“Hey, don’t go getting all guilty on me, Ranboob,” Tommy tells him. Ranboo jolts up in surprise, and Tommy softens. “It was just a dumb joke about punting me that gave him the idea,” Tommy reassures. “You’ve made that joke a million times before. It wasn’t your fault.”

“Yeah, Tommy’s just being a dumbass,” Tubbo says pointedly. Tommy shoots Tubbo a look.

“It’s my life, I can do what I want!”

Tubbo *glares*, and Tommy winces as Tubbo snaps, “Yeah, and if you don’t change your *fucking* mind, I’m going to have to exile my best friend again!”

They all go quiet.

Tommy’s silent. Ranboo’s just looks sad. “We...we can find another way?” Tommy offers hesitantly, guilt twisting in his gut. Tubbo just groans in frustration, pinching the bridge of his nose furiously.

“No- no. You’re set on this, I’m not going to ruin it with my own selfishness.”

“Tubbo-” Tommy tries to cut in.

“I’m going to plan out my own lore, I guess. Night.”

And Tubbo leaves the call.

Neither of them speak for a long, long time. Finally, Ranboo says hesitantly, “Tommy...”

Tommy breathes out, *refusing* to let himself cry. He won’t. Not when this is his fault- *again*. “I’m gonna go too, Ranboo,” he says quietly. Ranboo seems to wilt, shoulders slumping.

“Okay,” he whispers. A pause. “Love you, Tommy.”

Despite himself, Tommy softens slightly and gives Ranboo a faint grin. “Love you too, Ran,” he murmurs back. Ranboo offers the smallest of smiles, and Tommy hangs up.

As soon as he’s off the phone, his shoulders slump. He’s fucking *sick* of crying, so even as the tears threaten to overwhelm him, he buries the palms of his hands in them, shoving them in. “Get yourself together,” Tommy mutters to himself, pressing until he sees stars. “You’re fine. You’re- you’re fine.”

Tubbo’s pissed at him, again. Ranboo’s upset. It’s his fault.

Funny how everything comes in full circle, in the end.

you’re a dick, Tubbo DMs him out of the blue just before Tommy goes to sleep. Tommy’s breath hitches as he reads the message, sitting down heavily on the bed. *you’d better know what you’re doing*.

Tommy takes a moment to reply. *i hope i do*, he responds, laying down and curling up on his side. Tubbo’s typing for a long time.

i’ll be here, Tubbo sends. *you’re an absolute dumbass, but you’re an idiot if you think i’m leaving you alone at all*

Tommy feels his eyes burn with tears. *like i’d ever think differently*, Tommy sends back. There’s nothing for a while, then Tommy types out, *love you, tubs*

Tubbo replies immediately. *love you too, idiot*

Tommy falls asleep with his phone on his chest, hand still wrapped around it.

-

Wilbur knows Tommy.

He's only known Tommy for a little less than a year – and *damn*, it feels wild that he's only known this kid for that long but he's become so important to him – but Wilbur feels confident that he does know Tommy pretty damn well. He knows when he's happy, when he's frustrated, when he's angry- he *knows* Tommy.

So when Tommy and Tubbo act out their split in their friendship, and Tommy, in the end, has to be exiled, Wilbur notices that something's off.

Tubbo seems sad, too, but Wilbur can't help but focus in on the way Tommy's shoulders seem to *slump* on stream, the way he actually seems close to tears, the way he keeps turning his character back to look at Tubbo; the desperation in his voice as he *begged* to not be taken away.

Tommy's an amazing actor, Wilbur knows, but he can't help but feel that this is...different, than before.

Silently, he makes Ghostbur follow after Tommy, and makes a mental note to join Tommy in exile whenever possible. He hadn't planned on Ghostbur really accompanying Tommy other than the few things he had planned already, but he wants to be nearby, if Tommy needs him.

It's probably just an act, but Wilbur doesn't plan on letting his little brother get hurt.

Not again.

-

Tommy fucking hates this.

It's- it's not as bad. It's *nowhere* near as bad as last time, where Dream hit him at the drop of a hat and starved him and wouldn't let him keep *anything* for himself. This time, he has Tubbo on his side- this time, it's over as soon as the stream ends- this time, he's not *alone*.

But...he still gets flashbacks, sometimes. He still has nightmares about Dream's hand around his throat, about his home getting blown up, about building up, up, up. Even knowing it's over, even knowing that Tubbo's *right there* if he needs him, even knowing that Ranboo's just waiting a DM away if Tommy needs reprieve from the story, it still- it still *sucks*.

Ghostbur's there, now, more than he remembers. If he were any less desperate, he might question just *why* Wilbur decided to play Ghostbur this way, but instead he's just appreciative.

A couple of days or so into his exile, Tommy's third stream, Ghostbur comes to visit yet again.

"Hello, Tommy!" He says cheerily. Tommy sighs, and turns his character to face him.

"Hi, Ghostbur." Tommy's quiet. Part of that's his character, a lot of it is his own exhaustion. Ender, how is he supposed to play this for a month more?

No. Tommy shakes his head, forcing himself to sit up straighter. No, he can handle this. He promised he could – he's not about to back out now.

Ghostbur's been rambling for a while, now – Tommy hasn't been listening, but the familiar lilt of his voice is comforting. Tommy hasn't really allowed himself to think about it for a *long* time, but he...he did miss Ghostbur. A lot.

(He still blames himself, sometimes, for Ghostbur's death. It hurts, thinking about it.)

"So, Tommy, I knew that what you love most is..." Like a bolt of lightning, Tommy snaps to attention. He forces himself to not react; forces himself to not show the way his heart has started pumping ten times faster. Because- he *knows* what's about to happen.

Ghostbur throws a familiar, familiar object, and Tommy already knows what he's going to say when he exclaims, "Is Tubbo!"

Tommy's breath catches as the compass pops into his inventory. It doesn't look the same, not really, but he still can't stop himself from staring at it. Back- back then, Tommy lost his own compass. He's not quite sure what happened to it, just that at the beginning of Doomsday he had it and at the end he didn't.

Neither of them were able to keep their compasses, in the end.

Now they'll have them again. Even if they're not in physical form, something settles in Tommy's chest. It's like a reminder: Tubbo's here. Tommy knows, now, no matter what Tommy does, no matter how far they stray from each other, their love will always remain true.

Tubbo's here, and he's not leaving.

Tommy lets his lips turn up into a small, sincere smile, and murmurs, "Thank you, Ghostbur."

He's not sure if the emotion in his voice comes through, but there's something tender in Wilbur's as he responds, "You're welcome, Tommy."

Ghostbur- and Wilbur- leave, and though Tommy's alone again in call, and Dream could come back any second, Tommy's heart feels just a little lighter.

-

Tubbo...Tubbo never knew it was this bad.

He knew Exile was horrible. Of course he did; Tommy had nightmares constantly, even months after his exile ended. Tommy's fear in Dream is so deep-rooted; he used to be afraid at even the mention of Dream's name. It's better now that they have friend-Dream, but before-Dream still haunts Tommy's nightmares. Tubbo *knows* that.

But- watching Tommy's streams, watching as Dream forces Tommy to blow up his stuff every single day, as Tommy's verbally abused any time he and Dream are together, watching as Tommy has to live in a fucking *hut* without even a *little* bit of decency-

Tubbo's angry, first of all, but he also can't stop himself from feeling *overwhelmingly* guilty.

He did this. Tommy doesn't blame him anymore, but Tubbo knows- this was his fault. It's his fault Tommy went through this in the first place. It's his fault that Tommy still has nightmares; it's his fault that Tommy has to act out all of this *again*. He should've just told Tommy *no*, should've forced him to reconsider the fact that acting out all of his deepest traumas is a *stupid fucking idea*.

He never should've exiled Tommy in the first place.

Tubbo shoves his face into his hands, and tries not to scream. Or cry- probably both, honestly.

Tommy's been getting worse again, too. Tubbo tries to call Tommy after every stream – and he knows that Ranboo's always there for him when Tommy needs him, too – and Tommy always looks so *downtrodden*. He looks sad, and though Tubbo can normally get him smiling again after a little while, he still looks more down than he's looked since Tubbo met him again.

It's after Tubbo can't get Tommy smiling even an hour after their streams have both ended that Tubbo decides he's had enough. "Okay," Tubbo says firmly. Tommy glances up, eyes half-lidded and tired, bags under his eyes deep. "Toms, you can't keep *doing* this."

Tommy groans and rubs at his eyes. "Tubbo, you know I have to," he says dully. Tubbo rolls his eyes.

"Yeah, 'cause you're a dumbass." Tommy looks down, and Tubbo lets his tone soften.

"Tommy, look at me."

Tommy lets his eyes flick upwards so their eyes meet through the screen, and Tubbo says, "Okay, here's what we're doing. You're gonna tell your parents that you're coming down to my place more often now. I'll tell my parents the same. We both have greenscreens, and we never stream at the same time. We'll make this work."

Furrowing his brows in confusion, Tommy asks, "Wait- wait, Tubbo, slow down. What the fuck are you saying?"

"I'm saying that you're going to fucking come over when you're streaming exile," Tubbo states. "Or I'm going over to yours. I don't give a *fuck* how hard this might be to coordinate- I'm not letting you be alone a single second longer after streams like this."

Tommy just opens and closes his mouth a few times. “You-” He looks overwhelmed, eyes shining. Tubbo softens even more. “You’d do that for me? Even after-”

“Of *course*-” Tubbo tries to interject, but Tommy continues.

“Even though it’s my fault?” Tommy finishes, voice small. Tubbo sighs, shoulders slumping a bit before he looks straight at the camera. He can’t quite lock eyes with him; this is the closest he can come to it when they’re apart.

Tubbo says softly, “Tommy, just because I was pissed at you doesn’t mean I don’t still love you.” Tommy flushes slightly, looking down and fiddling with the hem of his shirt. He lets out a shuddering breath. He looks close to tears. Tubbo lowers his voice, and adds on, “Toms, you deserve to feel safe after streams like this. If I can do that for you, I’m going to do it.”

Tommy takes in a shaky breath, letting it out slowly. He gives Tubbo a heartbreakingly real smile, and whispers, “Thanks, Tubs.”

Shaking his head, Tubbo leans back in his chair and gives Tommy an equally heartfelt grin. “Love you, Tommy.”

“Love you too.” Tommy frowns slightly, then, and asks, “You doing alright? I know this time wasn’t the best for you, either.”

Tubbo shrugs, keeping his voice carefully light. “I’m doing alright. It wasn’t that bad. I promise I’m fine.”

Tommy narrows his eyes slightly, searching Tubbo for- something. Tubbo’s sure to keep his face mild, and Tommy eventually leans back, appeased. “Alright, Tubs – just know I’m here if you need me, too.”

Heart painfully soft, Tubbo gives Tommy a smile. “I’ll remember.”

Tommy grins back. “Good.” And- they’re not all okay, they still have the worst yet to get through, but- with their compasses back, and their new plan, Tubbo can’t help but feel like things will be alright soon.

They have this new life, and goddamnit if they’re not going to make the best of it.

-

“Tommy, you- you alright?”

Tommy pans his character’s vision over, meeting the eyes of Ranboo’s own character. Ranboo’s voice is carefully controlled, still failing to hide the concern that Tommy knows how to look for, now. Back then, he hadn’t really had the mind to understand that Ranboo was *scared* whenever he visited. Now he can.

Even though his chest feels a little too heavy, Tommy can’t help his heart softening a bit. Ranboo’s always cared- it just took Tommy too long to realize.

He doesn't let any of his love filter through his words, just muttering, "Yeah, I'm fine."
Ranboo lets out a bit of a hum.

"Well, you wanna- you wanna come with me, then? Get away from here?" Tommy can't help but imagine Ranboo standing there, shoulders hunched and hands twisting together nervously. Wincing internally, Tommy makes his character glance over at the massive pool of lava, before panning back and shifting away from the edge.

"Yeah, alright," he says quietly, moving to follow after Ranboo. Ranboo lets out a little huff of relief, and all of a sudden it *hurts* that Tommy can't be there with Ranboo in person. He can't hug him. He can't jump on his back and laugh at his startled yelp anymore; can't yell at him for ruffling Tommy's hair teasingly. He won't be able to for a *while*. It sucks ass.

Especially now- Ranboo's an absolute *sweetheart*. He's messaged Tommy multiple times, telling him in no uncertain terms that if Tommy ever needs anything while he's streaming, if exile gets too intense, to let him know. Tommy hasn't done it yet, but Ranboo seems to always *know*, anyway, when Tommy really needs him. It's like he's always watching.

Regardless of if Ranboo's streaming or not, he's always there.

A hand reaches over and squeezes Tommy's knee, and Tommy glances over briefly to see Tubbo looking at him, eyebrows raised slightly. *You alright?* he seems to be asking. Tommy nods the tiniest amount and looks back to the screen.

And with Tubbo here, too, Tommy can almost disconnect himself from the memories.

Tommy makes it through the rest of the stream alright. Ranboo sticks with him the whole time, making jokes and seeming determined to keep Tommy from thinking about anything from his memories. He makes the absolute *worst* puns, and by the end, Tommy just wants to fly to America to punch him. Seriously, they were *so* bad.

After he ends, Tommy collapses back into his seat and groans a little. Tubbo'd already streamed before this – they never stream at the same time so that they can keep this set-up working – and so Tommy just leans into him when Tubbo wraps an arm around his shoulders. "Good job," Tubbo murmurs, pressing a kiss into Tommy's hair. Tommy closes his eyes and just *breathes*, for a bit.

"Thanks," he breathes, before he cracks his eyes open and looks to the screen. Ranboo's still there in call, probably waiting anxiously for any sign that Tommy's not alright. "Thanks, Ran," Tommy says louder, lips curving into a small smile.

Ranboo lets out a little huff of breath, turning on his camera. His smile is heartbreakingly genuine when he responds, "Anytime, Toms."

Tommy mirrors his smile, and lets his eyes slip closed. He leans more fully against Tubbo. Tubbo chuckles a bit, rubbing circles into Tommy's shoulder with his thumb. "Tired?" He asks, amused.

"Shut up," Tommy mutters, but snuggles a little further in. Tubbo just laughs more.

“Yeah, alright,” he acquiesces. Tommy’s mind is fogging over, tiredness taking over, but he can just barely make out Tubbo telling Ranboo, “He’s falling asleep, Boo- I’ll call you later, alright?”

Ranboo responds faintly, “Alright, Tubbo. Love you both.”

“ove you, ‘an,” Tommy mumbles. He thinks he hears both of them laugh.

He just barely hears Tubbo respond with, “Love you too, Boo,” before he’s asleep.

-

When Tommy wakes up, he’s been moved to his bed. His head’s pillowed in what must be Tubbo’s lap; fingers are absently playing with his hair. Tommy cracks his eyes open to see Tubbo above him, scrolling through his phone.

“Hey,” he mumbles sleepily. Tubbo glances down, a small smile playing at his lips.

He responds playfully, “Hey, sleepyhead.”

Tommy groans, snuggling further into Tubbo’s lap. “Shut up,” he mutters, grabbing at his shirt. Tubbo just laughs.

“Hey, Toms, sit up for me?” Tubbo asks.

“Don’t wanna,” Tommy says mulishly. Tubbo lightly tugs at Tommy’s hair.

“C’mon,” he insists. Tommy sighs exasperatedly, but does as Tubbo asks, blinking the sleepiness away.

He raises his eyebrows. “What d’you want?” Tubbo bites his lip, eyes shifting away from Tommy’s for a brief moment before meeting them again. His hands have moved behind his back. Tommy, curious, sits up straighter.

“I-” Tubbo sucks in another breath, before he shakes his head, closing his eyes. “Here,” Tubbo says instead, removing his hands from behind his back and shoving something at Tommy. Tommy furrows his brows, taking the package and staring down at it. It’s a box, doesn’t look like anything special.

Tommy looks back up at Tubbo questioningly. “What is it?” Tubbo rolls his eyes, obviously trying to appear annoyed but just looking fond, and a little nervous. Tommy’s curiosity only grows.

“Why don’t you open it and see?” Tubbo retorts. Tommy sighs, but gives in easily enough.

“Alright, alright,” he says slowly, opening the wrapping. He’s not careful with it, like Ranboo would be, but Tubbo doesn’t seem to care, just watching him in anticipation. Finally, the box is unveiled, and Tommy opens it without any further ado.

Instantly, his heart stops.

Tommy stares down at- at *it*, for a moment, before he looks back up at Tubbo. “Tubbo?” he asks again, voice small. He has no doubt his eyes are wide. There’s a burning at the backs of them; he blinks quickly to make it go away. Tubbo just looks unbearably soft, and nods down at the package again.

“Take it out, bossman,” he encourages. Tommy takes in a small, shuddering breath, and does.

The compass isn’t quite the same as before, but it still fits in Tommy’s hand perfectly. Tommy breathes out shakily, gripping it and staring down at it. He turns it over and his breath hitches again. Carefully, he traces his fingertips over the engraving in the back.

Your Tubbo.

A drop of water lands on Tommy’s hand, and he snuffles, scrubbing at his eyes. Figures *this* is what makes him cry, after he’s done so well the past few weeks of not doing that. Tommy turns it back over, and he lets out a small sob.

“It points at you,” he laughs wetly. Tubbo swipes briefly at his eyes, before he meets Tommy’s own. His eyes are teary, too.

“That’s just ‘cause I’m north, bossman.” Tubbo giggles a bit, pulling at a chain around his neck. An identical compass falls against his heart when Tubbo lets go of it, and Tommy lets out another sob. “I did my best with the design. They’re not perfect, and can’t point directly at us, but-”

“Shut the fuck up,” Tommy says, laughing, and launches himself at Tubbo. Tubbo catches him easily, giggling a little as Tommy shoves his face into the crook of Tubbo’s neck. “You absolute dick, keeping this hidden from me.” He leans back slightly to meet Tubbo’s eyes, and says sincerely, “I *love* them, Tubbo.”

Tubbo lets out a little bit of a breath- sounding *relieved*. As if Tommy would *ever* dislike a gift like this- dislike a gift from *Tubbo*. “I’m glad you like them,” Tubbo whispers, and Tommy brings him close again, chest to chest, heart to heart.

“I fuckin’ adore them,” Tommy says fiercely. He just holds Tubbo close for a bit, letting his breathing return to normal. “I love you so much,” he breathes into Tubbo’s ear. Tubbo chuckles wetly, and hugs Tommy back a little tighter.

“I love you too.”

They stay like that for a while. Just- Tommy keeping Tubbo by him, able to hear his breathing and feel his warmth and feel his heartbeat- it’s nice. And Tommy feels slapped in the face with affection, with gratitude and *love*.

He could’ve spent this afternoon alone and gloomy, could’ve spent it curled up in his bed and sleeping the pain away like he has the past week or so. He could’ve gone to sleep with his shoulders heavy, woken up with eyes even heavier. He could’ve been so much less happy, without this feeling of lightness and joy in his heart. But, instead-

“Hey, Tommy, wanna go get your ass kicked in Mario Kart?” Tubbo asks, leaning back so he can grin at Tommy. Tommy throws his head back and *laughs*.

“You fuckin’ *wish*, bitch!”

Instead, he holds his best friend’s hand, and feels at peace.

-

Wilbur sighs as Tommy’s stream ends, closing the window he’d been using to watch. He rests his head in his hands, rubbing at his eyes before looking back at the screen again. “Fuck,” he breathes. His shoulders slump, and all he can do is stare dully at the screen for a moment.

Wilbur’s aware that Tommy’s a great actor. He’s seen it, time and time and time again. But- Tommy’s been acting out a storyline involving some *very* heavy themes; acting out being verbally abused, acting out being *physically* abused, acting out staying in the nether for too long and staring at lava, and-

It all seems so *real*. Tommy always looks so scared when Dream shows up. He looks so sad when he’s left alone for the umpteenth time. Even when Ghostbur or Ranboo are there, Tommy never quite reverts back to himself.

He seems lonely.

It’s a story, Wilbur reminds himself. It’s a story. It doesn’t mean anything. It only makes sense that Tommy would play the part this way.

He can’t quite convince himself.

Because- Tommy’s also quiet after stream. Back before his exile, Wilbur used to be able to get Tommy laughing in seconds after heavy lore streams. Wilbur knows that Tommy’s more affected by emotional streams than Wilbur himself is, but...this is different. Wilbur can’t seem to do *anything* to help Tommy, and more often than not, Tommy logs off immediately. Wilbur can only hope it’s to talk to someone else – Tubbo, maybe. Or Ranboo, since they’ve been getting closer recently.

Something aches inside him as he thinks about the fact that he might not be enough.

Wilbur shakes his head furiously, ridding himself of that thought. This isn’t about him, right now. This is about his best friend; about his little brother. Wilbur doesn’t quite know what he could do to help, but...

He needs to do something.

Sighing yet again, Wilbur opens up discord and pulls up his DMs with Phil. Phil always has good advice- Wilbur can only hope Phil can help him out with this, as well.

Phil only takes a few moments to answer once Wilbur calls. “Hey, mate,” Phil greets, an easy smile on his face as he turns on his camera. Wilbur’s shoulders slump a little in relief.

He turns on his own camera as well, and says, “Hi, Phil.” Phil’s brows narrow.

“Everything alright, Wil?” Phil asks, worry threading through his voice. Wilbur lets out a breath, shaking his head slightly.

“No, I-” Wilbur cuts himself off, taking in a breath and letting it out. “Phil, have you watched any of Tommy’s streams recently?”

Phil furrows his eyebrows, shaking his head. “No, I’ve been streaming during that time.” A pause. “Is there something I should be worried about?”

Wilbur huffs a little in frustration. “I don’t *know*, is the thing,” Wilbur says. “Tommy’s- he’s acting out this whole exile arc, y’know.”

“...Yeah, I heard about that,” Phil answers. “What, he upset by it?”

“I think so,” Wilbur says miserably. “He always seems so *sad*, after stream. And- his acting’s always been good, we know this, but-”

“You’re worried it might be too much for him,” Phil finishes, a knowing tinge to his voice. Wilbur nods, closing his eyes and slumping. Wilbur gives Phil a moment to think. Soon, Phil continues, “Well, let’s keep an eye on him; hang out with him a little more. If he seems to be getting worse, we can figure out what to do from there, and change the story if we need to.”

Wilbur thinks over the words, the tension in his back easing as the meaning sinks in. “Okay,” Wilbur breathes, not even attempting to hide his relief. “Okay.”

Phil smiles soothingly. “Don’t worry, Wil,” Phil says. “We’ll take care of him.”

“Yeah,” Wilbur murmurs, something soft in his heart. “Yeah, we will.”

“He’ll be alright,” Phil reassures. “All of them are alright.” Wilbur nods to himself, finally letting the last of the tightness in his shoulders release.

“Yeah,” he whispers. “Yeah.”

They’ll make sure of it.

Chapter End Notes

the full lyric that the title is from (the song is devil town by cavetown) is 'but i feel a little safer when i'm with you' and i thought it was fitting ;')

thank you all again SO much for all the support, it means the world!!! things are Happening now and i hope yall are ready :D

see you all sunday <3

protect what's yours

Chapter Summary

“Tommy?”

Tommy gasps a little, turning his character around. Tubbo’s own character stands in front of him, crouching. “...Tubbo?” He asks hesitantly, as if he can’t believe it. Both of them pause, letting the silence drag between them.

Then, they both start *yelling*.

“YOoooooooooooo!” Tommy crows, laughing as Tubbo does the same.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Tommy?”

Tommy gasps a little, turning his character around. Tubbo’s own character stands in front of him, crouching. “...Tubbo?” He asks hesitantly, as if he can’t believe it. Both of them pause, letting the silence drag between them.

Then, they both start *yelling*.

“YOoooooooooooo!” Tommy crows, laughing as Tubbo does the same. They’re playing their reunion up a little bit – pretending like it’s their roleplay characters reuniting, but Tommy can’t help but feel incredibly excited anyway.

When they’d found out that they were going to be teamed up together yet again for MCC, they’d both been *so* happy. They’ve been teamed together for pretty much every MCC since Tubbo joined other than his first, but this one’s...different. They haven’t been able to stream together in *ages*, and Tommy’s missed it. It’s always fun, streaming with Tubbo, and he’s sure this MCC will be no different.

It’s also a nice breather from...everything, really. Tommy’s better, now that he has the compass and Tubbo beside him every step of the way, but- well. Re-living his path to becoming suicidal really isn’t that fun. (Though, the gratification of hearing from *everyone* that what Dream did was fucked up, that what Tommy went through was actually horrible-hearing from Dream *himself* that his character’s a piece of shit...it’s not nice, but it makes Tommy feel a little more settled.)

Predictably, Tommy and Tubbo spend the whole MCC just messing around. They don’t place super well, but that doesn’t matter. What matters is Tommy’s *finally* able to just be himself

on-stream, finally able to just goof off and laugh and shout and be *with* his best friend. It's really, really, *really* nice being able to do it again.

And Tommy can tell that Tubbo's having just as much fun – Tommy hasn't heard Tubbo's voice sound this bright in *ages*, hasn't heard him laugh this freely in even longer. It makes something ease in his chest; makes him feel like everything's going to be okay. Everything's gonna be alright, even though things aren't amazing right now.

When they end stream, Tommy's still grinning. He hops into his, Tubbo's, and Ranboo's group chat as has become the habit the past couple of weeks, and when Tubbo and Ranboo join, they're both smiling. "Good job, guys," Ranboo says encouragingly. Tommy and Tubbo can't quite meet eyes, but they both burst out laughing in sync anyway. They really, truly did *not* do a good job. Ranboo's too sweet to say that to them, though.

"Not really, bossman, but thanks," Tubbo says lightly, leaning back in his seat. He looks so *happy*.

Ranboo rolls his eyes a little. "Just let me praise my best friends, won't you?" He complains halfheartedly, his own smile taking away from any scolding tone he might've had.

Giggling, Tommy says, "Absolutely not, king, sorry." Ranboo shakes his head. His smile quirks up just a little further. He looks fond.

"It's nice to see you both smiling like this again," Ranboo whispers. Part of Tommy softens, not missing the way Ranboo's shoulders hunch up slightly and his hands start twisting up in each other.

He gives Ranboo a gentle smile. "We're doing alright, Ran."

"Yeah!" Tubbo cheers. "This was a lot of fun!" He pauses for a second, and then snorts slightly. "Boo, your comments in chat were absolutely ridiculous."

Ranboo laughs briefly. "Hey, I couldn't be in VC to make fun of you guys, so I had to do it somehow," he says cheekily. Tubbo narrows his eyes playfully.

"Making fun of me is quite rude, I'll have you know. I'm actually very upset."

"Uh-huh," Ranboo replies, unimpressed.

Tommy holds back his own laughs and adds on, "Yeah, Ranboob, you wanna make us cry or something?"

Ranboo narrows his own eyes. "Did you *really* have to use that nickname?" He asks exasperatedly. Tommy just shrugs, smiling mildly.

"Get a taste of your own medicine," he says simply.

"That's not how that works?"

"It is now!"

“No, it really- it really just is not.”

“Are you questioning my intelligence, Ranboo?”

“Maybe I am.”

“Die.”

“Hmm, no thank you.”

“Fuck you, bitch.”

“Oh, I haven’t heard that one before-”

“You two,” Tubbo breaks in, “Are idiots.”

“Shut up, Tubbo,” Ranboo and Tommy snap in unison.

They all fall silent, staring at each other. Then, they all burst into laughter. Tommy feels lighter than he has in ages, and he knows that it’s going to be alright.

It’s gonna be alright.

-

Going back to being separated from his best friend just hurts more after MCC, Tubbo finds.

He’s- he’s fine. He’s doing alright, but he can’t hide the fact that this is grating at him. It’s slowly wearing him down, more and more, and even though Tommy’s sitting right across the room from him, he’s having a harder time staying himself; having a harder time not falling back into his calm, composed, unaffected mindset.

Ranboo’s helping, just like he did back in the before. When he’s not hanging out with Tommy, he’s with Tubbo, distracting him and helping him out and just being a bright spot in the otherwise depressing storyline – in the otherwise horrible part of Tubbo’s life. He wasn’t quite this involved, the first time. They weren’t really all that close until after the final disk war; Tubbo trusted Ranboo more than life and knew he could count on him, but they weren’t best friends until later.

But now, Ranboo’s leading the charge for all the small changes Tubbo admitted he would’ve liked to make to L’Manberg before it disappeared – he’s helping Tubbo create a bee sanctuary, and pulling Tubbo away from his work when it gets to be too much, and making the majority of the streams *fun*, instead of just painful.

‘Course, it doesn’t take away from the fact that Tommy’s still fucking *exiled*, and Tubbo should’ve done *better*, but- it helps.

Tubbo shoves his feelings way down deep and attempts to act like nothing’s bothering him.

He should’ve known Ranboo wouldn’t put up with that.

“Hey,” Ranboo says gently, after another stream. Tommy’s asleep on the bed behind Tubbo, so it’s just the two of them in call at the moment. “You doing alright?”

Tubbo schools his face into one of confusion, and states, “Yeah, I’m fine. Why?”

Ranboo gives him a look. “I know you, Tubbo,” he reminds, tone painfully soft. It’s the tone he uses when Tubbo’s sad, when he knows Tubbo needs a little more of a gentle touch. Tubbo *hates* how much hearing it right now helps.

Tubbo sighs, letting his shoulders slump a little. “It’s...hard, Boo,” he admits quietly. Ranboo hums lightly, an understanding look on his face.

“You miss him,” he says.

Tubbo glances over his shoulder; Tommy snores right at that moment, and something in Tubbo’s chest loosens a little bit. He thumbs at the compass hanging around his neck, and whispers, “...Yeah. I do.” He *shouldn’t*; Tommy’s right here, and they still hang out all the time, and he has *all he need*, but-

“Tubbo,” Ranboo interjects, and Tubbo shakes himself out of his thoughts. Ranboo’s got a mildly chiding look on his face. Tubbo loves and hates both how well Ranboo knows him. Ranboo’s tone softens, and he leans forward towards the camera, reassuring, “You’re allowed to be upset about this, you know.”

Tubbo bites his lower lip hard enough to bleed. He clenches his hands tight, releasing them after a moment and letting out a breath. “...I know,” he says. Ranboo doesn’t look convinced.

“When Tommy wakes up,” Ranboo starts, “Talk to him about this.”

Shaking his head, Tubbo immediately shuts him down. “Tommy’s got enough of his own stuff to worry about,” he brushes off. “I’m fine.”

“Tubbo-”

“Ranboo,” Tubbo cuts off, and Ranboo’s mouth snaps shut. He hunches in on himself, eyes cast downward. Guilt curls in Tubbo’s gut, and he says reassuringly, “I promise I’m alright. Hey, Ranboo- look at me, Boo.”

Ranboo flicks his eyes upwards, looking through his bangs. Tubbo says slowly, steadily, “I’m alright. I’ve got Tommy. I’ve got everyone else. I promise I’m alright.”

It’s only a little bit of a lie.

Ranboo stares at Tubbo for a moment, before all the fight goes out of his shoulders. “... Alright, Tubbo,” he whispers. “Let- let me know if you need anything, though?” Ranboo pleads. Tubbo huffs out an affectionate laugh.

“I will,” he promises. Ranboo smiles the slightest bit.

“Alright.” Ranboo lets out a bit of a breath, before he says, “Love you, ‘Bo.”

A sudden surge of love floods through Tubbo, and it physically *hurts* for an instant that Tubbo can't hug his husband. "Love you too, Boo," Tubbo says.

"Now go take a nap," Ranboo suggests. "I'll talk to you later."

Tubbo debates with himself for a moment, before he sighs in defeat. "Yeah, alright." Tubbo brings his mouse to hover over the end call button, and he whispers, "I'll talk to you later. Bye."

He hangs up, and pads over to the bed to lay down next to Tommy. Tommy instantly curls around him, and Tubbo finally lets himself fully relax as he falls asleep.

-

Tommy stares down into the lava, and- for a moment, it's like he's back *there*.

It's not the same- of course it isn't. Tommy's staring at a screen, not at the real thing. He can't feel the warmth bubbling up, the heavy, humid air pushing down on his shoulders. He can't feel the countless bruises painted into his skin, feel the way his eyes just can't seem to stay open.

His shoulders still feel just as weighed down, though, and it almost feels just the same.

And when- when Dream speaks, Tommy forgets himself. His voice goes shaky, his eyes go wide, he makes his head jerk around just like it did back then. It's even hard pulling himself away from the lava, after.

Tubbo gives him a worried look out of the corner of his eye; places a hand on his knee to help soothe him. For the first time since they've started this system, it doesn't help.

The stream- the stream ends, soon after. Tommy lets himself slump, groaning and shoving the heels of his hands into his eyes. Ender, he *hates* this. He wished he never agreed to it. He's such a *fucking* dumbass-

"Hey, Tommy, great job!" Dream says cheerily. Tommy jerks slightly, eyes wide open and sitting up straight. Dream continues, voice slipping back down into his warm timbre instead of the low, cruel voice he uses while acting. "That was *awesome*- you're doing alright, right? Even I was getting a little worried towards the end."

Tubbo silently wraps an arm around Tommy's shoulders, and Tommy leans his head against Tubbo's own shoulder, suddenly exhausted. "I'm alright, thanks, Dream," Tommy says tiredly.

Dream hums. "Just let us know if it ever becomes too much," Dream reminds. "You're a brilliant actor, but this is some real shit. I don't want to force you to do anything you're uncomfortable with."

And this- this is why Tommy *can't* back out. This Dream is so goddamn *nice* all the time, being extra supportive of all of them – not just Tommy. He stays after every exile stream to make sure that Tommy's doing alright and to just goof around a bit, and though it doesn't

help as much as Tommy would like, it does help separate Dream-the-Minecrafter from Dream-the-evil-bastard.

Tommy couldn't stand to disappoint him, and so he keeps going.

"Thanks, Dream, but I'm all good to keep going," Tommy says. His tone isn't as genuine as he'd hoped. He hopes Dream doesn't notice. "I'm gonna head out now, though, if that's alright?"

He can't see Dream right now, but Tommy would bet he's smiling. "'Course that's okay, Tommy. See you tomorrow, alright?"

Tommy carefully hides a wince at the thought of tomorrow, and nods even though Dream can't see him. Tubbo shoots him a look. Tommy glances back – *I'll explain in a bit*. "Alright. See you then."

"Bye!" Tommy disconnects, then, and Tubbo's instantly speaking.

"You really okay?" Tubbo asks again, tone insistent. Tommy sighs, shoulders feeling heavier than they have in a long, long time.

Taking in a breath, Tommy whispers, "I'm...I'll be okay. But-"

Tommy cuts himself off. Tubbo probes gently, "But?"

"Can you- can we just sit, for a while?" Tommy presses his forehead into Tubbo's chest, and mumbles, "I just really need a hug, right now."

Tubbo takes in a shuddering breath, and both his arms come around Tommy's back. "Course, Toms," Tubbo murmurs into Tommy's hair. "We'll stay for as long as you need."

Tommy breathes out, and goes limp against Tubbo. Tubbo stays there, steady steady steady, and holds him close. He plays with the edges of Tommy's hair, and asks quietly, "What's tomorrow?"

Tommy's breath hitches. "The-" Tommy swallows. "The beach party," he barely breathes.

Tubbo's next breath seems very carefully controlled. "Oh," he whispers, and Tommy can't help but laugh a little, devoid of humor.

"Yeah, *oh*," Tommy responds. He goes quiet, and Tubbo doesn't say anything either, going back to running reassuring fingers through Tommy's hair. Tommy never fully went into detail about exile, but even Tubbo knows about the beach party; knows how much it affected Tommy.

"...I'll be here," Tubbo finally says. Tommy just snuggles a little closer.

"I know you will."

Tommy just hopes it's enough.

-

It's not enough. It's not *fucking* enough.

Tommy- Tommy can't do this. He thought he could, he thought he could handle this, but- being reminded of the fact that back then, he thought no one wanted to show up, he thought no one *bothered* to show up, it- it hurts more than Tommy thought it would.

Even having Tubbo beside him, holding his fucking *hand*, doesn't help.

After the stream, for the first time since the compasses, Tommy feels tears running down his cheeks. He immediately leaves the call with Dream – guilt settles heavy in his gut, but- he *can't*. He brings a hand to his face, frantically swiping at his tears. The tears won't fucking *stop*.

"Toms- hey, Toms, c'mere."

Tubbo gently tugs Tommy into his arms, and Tommy buries his face in Tubbo's chest. His chest *hurts*. "Sorry, sorry- sorry," Tommy babbles, unable to hold back even a single sob. Tubbo hushes him, hand smoothing over his hair.

"You have nothing to apologize for, Tommy." Tubbo pulls Tommy impossibly closer, and murmurs into his hair, "Just let it out, Toms. Just let it out."

"I *hate* this- I hate this, I hate this, I hate this, I *hate this*."

"I know. I know." Tommy grabs at Tubbo's shirt; Tubbo gently slips his hand into Tommy's. Tommy grasps desperately at it. Tubbo presses it to his chest, and goes, "Hey, Tommy, can you breathe with me?"

Tommy sucks in a quick breath, holding it and letting it out slowly. And again, and again. Slowly but surely, his breath comes back under his control. Finally, he's able to lean back slightly, looking at Tubbo up through his eyelashes. Tubbo looks proud.

"There you are," he says encouragingly, bringing Tommy's hand away from his chest but not letting go of it. "There you are."

Tommy lets out a slow, shuddering breath, finally greeting Tubbo's small smile with one of his own. "Sorry," he whispers. Tubbo tuts, and hugs Tommy close.

"You're alright," Tubbo reassures. "Just breathe. I can't have you passing out on me."

Tommy huffs out a choked laugh. "What, don't want me laying all over you?" He chuckles wetly. Tubbo scoffs, though it sounds more affectionate than anything.

"Absolutely not," he confirms. A little dinging sound comes from the computer at that moment – Tommy can't bring himself to look over; he knows Tubbo will, anyway. "It's Wilbur," Tubbo says softly. "He wants us to join a call."

Tommy furrows his brows. "Wil?" He echoes. "Why?"

Tubbo shrugs, “I dunno.” There’s a brief pause, then Tubbo asks gently, “You up to it?”

Breathing in deeply, Tommy sits up, rubs at his eyes, and nods. “Yeah, I can do it,” he confirms. Tubbo squeezes his shoulder briefly, before he moves to accept the call.

Instantly, the sight of Wilbur makes Tommy’s shoulders relax slightly. There’s a warm smile on his face to start, but it quickly falls away in favor of concern. “Tommy? You alright?” Wilbur’s eyes flick over, and his lips quirk a little bit as he says, “And hi, Tubbo.”

Tubbo gives a little wave. Tommy remains silent, and Wilbur’s attention returns to him. “Tommy?” Wilbur probes gently. For some reason, that’s the little push that gets Tommy’s breath to hitch again. Wilbur sighs a little, and his voice is gently chiding as he says, “Toms, baby, you told us you’d let us know if things got to be too intense.”

Of course Wilbur noticed – in every world, he’s always known Tommy almost better than he knows himself. Tommy rears up slightly regardless. “I- I *can* handle this!”

“No you *can’t*,” Tubbo breaks in. Tommy shoots a glare at him. Tubbo glares right back. “Tommy, you were just *sobbing*! And this isn’t even the worst that you were planning on doing!”

“Still-” Tommy argues back, before Wilbur cuts him off.

“I’m bringing Phil and Techno into the call, one second.” Tommy gapes at the screen for a bit, before shaking his head.

“No- no, it’s fine-”

Tubbo slaps a hand over Tommy’s mouth. Tommy licks it. Tubbo doesn’t budge, only sending Tommy an annoyed glare; damn, he’s too used to Tommy at this point.

Phil joins the call quickly. “What’s wrong?” He asks immediately, before his eyes must land on Tommy. Instantly, he softens. “Oh, Tommy,” he says gently.

Tommy wraps his arms around himself as an attempt at comfort, and mutters, “I’m *fine*.”

Shaking his head, Phil shoots down, “No, you’re not.” Tommy opens his mouth, and Phil continues, “And that’s *okay*. It’s alright to not want to act out a literal suicide arc. It’s alright.”

Wilting, Tommy says, “But I promised to do it-”

“Dream will understand if you want to cut it short,” Wilbur interjects. Just then, Techno enters the call.

“Hullo,” he says casually. Tommy instantly feels a little more at ease. “So, I hear we have a child we need to rescue.”

Tommy opens his mouth, but then Techno continues, “I’ve been wanting to push everything with the Butcher Army and stuff forward, anyway- Tubbo, can you make it work?”

“Yes,” Tubbo says resolutely. He grabs Tommy’s hand again and rubs his thumb against the back.

“Alright, then, it’s settled- Tommy, you’re escaping as soon as you can instead of in a couple weeks like we’d originally planned.”

Tommy just- stares, for a moment, completely overwhelmed. “You- you’d do this for me?” He asks tentatively. Phil gives him a smile, Wilbur nods, resolved. Tubbo just holds his hand a little tighter.

“Course. It’s not a big deal. I’ll tell Dream; I’m sure he’d be fine with it anyway.”

All Tommy can do is breathe for a moment. His friends- his *family*- ender, they love him so much. They care about him enough to just- change it all so that he doesn’t have to suffer anymore. He loves them. He loves them so *fucking* much.

“Thank you guys,” Tommy whispers, the first smile since the stream tugging at his lips. Tubbo lets out a little, exasperated sigh and wraps his arm back around Tommy’s shoulder, nestling him close. Phil and Wilbur smile a little wider; Tommy can’t see Techno, but he’d bet that he’s smiling, too.

Phil says, “No need to thank us, mate. You’re our friend. We don’t want you suffering.”

Tommy closes his eyes against his tears for a moment, before he reopens them. He insists, “Still- *thank* you.”

They all just look fond. “You’re welcome, Toms,” Wilbur says warmly.

There’s a silence between the five for a bit, before Phil finally says, “Why don’t you take a nap? You look exhausted- you too, Tubbo.”

Tommy, embarrassingly, yawns. “Okay,” he whispers. “See you guys later.”

“See you,” Phil says warmly. “Sleep well, you two.”

Tubbo presses for them to leave the call, and immediately stands up, dragging Tommy with him. “Alright, to bed we go!” He cheers, a tired edge to his voice. Tommy laughs a bit and forces himself to follow.

Before they climb into bed, though, he yanks Tubbo into a hug. He lays his head on top of Tubbo’s, pressing a kiss to the crown of his head. “I love you,” he mumbles into his hair. Tubbo lets out a laugh and wraps his arms around Tommy’s waist.

“Love you too, dumbass,” he says affectionately. And-

Tommy falls asleep warm, and loved, and more content than he has in ages.

-

Tubbo watches as Tommy ends his stream, sinking back into his chair. His sigh is full of completely bone-deep relief, and Tubbo wipes away his own tears so that he can wrap his best friend in the tightest hug of his life.

“I’m so proud of you,” Tubbo whispers, burrowing deep into Tommy’s chest. “I’m *so* fucking proud of you.”

Tommy laughs wetly, linking his arms around Tubbo’s back. “It wasn’t much-” Tommy starts, embarrassed. Tubbo leans back and glares at him, because he *cannot* be that stupid.

“You just- Tommy, you just acted out one of the worst parts of your life *again*. And, honestly, the fact that you made it through that in the first place- I-”

Tubbo cuts himself off, sniffing, an ache settling in his chest. He left Tommy alone through all this, the first time. And Tommy, being broken and beaten down and torn apart, survived it anyway. “I’m so glad you made it,” Tubbo finally whispers, bowing his head.

A hand comes up and cups Tubbo’s cheek, swiping at the tears. “Tubs,” comes Tommy’s voice, low and caring. “Tubbo, look at me.”

Tubbo looks up, because he’s never been able to deny Tommy. Tommy smiles, and even though his eyes are red, he looks so painfully genuine. “Don’t go blaming yourself, alright?” Tommy says, staring Tubbo in the eyes. Tubbo’s shoulders hunch up, but he can’t bring himself to look away.

“But I-”

Tommy tuts. “Nope,” he says. “You did what you had to do. I- it sucked, it sucked ass and I never want to go through something like that again, but it’s not your fault. And, honestly...” Tommy trails off, swallowing. He continues in a whisper, “You’re the one- well, you and Ranboo- you guys are the ones that made it so I could get through it at all. You may not have been there, but...I still wanted to make it back to you someday.”

Tubbo can’t stop himself from *sobbing*. Tommy presses his forehead to Tubbo’s for a brief moment, and whispers, “It wasn’t your fault.”

Sniffing, Tubbo goes back in for the hug. His tears soak into Tommy’s shirt. Tommy doesn’t seem to care. “I love you,” Tubbo whispers into Tommy’s chest. “I love you so fucking much.”

Tommy pulls him impossibly closer, and murmurs, “I love you, too.”

The PC starts ringing, in that moment. Tubbo glances over to see Ranboo’s quite-frankly hilarious profile picture on the screen, and snorts a little. “Guess Ranboo’s stream ended,” Tubbo says amusedly. He leans back, swiping at his tears until his face is mostly dry. Tommy does the same, and gives Tubbo a grin.

“Can’t leave the Boob waiting, then, can we?” Tommy says, grinning. Tubbo laughs.

“Call him that to his face. I wanna see his reaction.”

Tommy shakes his head and giggles. "Pretty sure he'd fly over here just to murder me."

"Probably," Tubbo snorts, and accepts the call.

Instantly, Ranboo's face fills the screen. "Tommy!" He says excitedly. "You did it!"

Tommy's grin gains a heartbreakingly sincere tinge, and he responds, "Yeah, big man. I did."

"My chat was filled with people screaming in relief," Ranboo states, lips perked up slightly. He looks so *relieved*. Tubbo settles back into his seat, letting the two talk, a small smile tugging at his lips. Ranboo continues, "Good job, Toms. I'm proud of you."

Tommy laughs a little, rubbing the back of his head sheepishly. "Thanks, big man." Tommy goes quiet for a bit, and then whispers, "Thanks for all your help with- with the vault, and- y'know. Everything. I- I really appreciate it."

Ranboo shakes his head. "I wasn't about to let you deal with all that on your own," Ranboo says softly. "You- you deserve to know you're not alone, anymore."

Tommy snuffles, ducking his head. Tubbo reaches for his hand and threads his fingers through Tommy's. Tommy flashes him a small grin and squeezes. "I know that," Tommy says softly, genuinely. "I know that now."

"Good," Ranboo smiles. Something painfully soft flashes across his face. Tubbo's heart clenches- *ender*, he loves them. He loves them so, *so* much.

Tommy laughs a bit, then. "I can't wait for tomorrow's stream," Tommy says amusedly. "I'm gonna annoy Techno *so* much."

Tubbo carefully hides a wince at the thought of the next stream- he really doesn't want to think about what *he* has to act out, next.

His smile falls a bit. Ranboo, he thinks, notices, but Tommy doesn't. Ranboo opens his mouth; Tubbo shakes his head slightly. *Not now*, he mouths. Ranboo gives him a look, but his mouth closes. Tubbo feels both relieved and not.

He can worry about having to act out thinking Tommy committed suicide later. Not now. Not when Tommy's finally happy.

Tommy's more important.

They all hang out on call for a while. Tommy's grinning and laughing more than Tubbo's seen him do in a *while*, his relief almost palpable. Ranboo keeps flashing Tubbo looks. Tubbo shoves his dread and worry down deep, and keeps on smiling.

"Alright," Tommy sighs after a couple of hours. "I should probably head back home- the parental units have been texting me for a while."

"Yeah, probably," Tubbo agrees. Tommy gives him one last hug. Tubbo hugs back, and tries not to beg him to stay. "You good to stay home tomorrow, then?" Tubbo confirms.

Tommy nods. "Yeah, I should be fine. It'll probably be all goofs, anyway."

Tubbo closes his eyes for a brief, brief second. "Alright," he whispers. "I'll see you later, then. Text me when you get home."

Saluting him, Tommy says, "Will do." He calls over his shoulder, "Bye, Ranboob!"

Ranboo sighs. "Bye, Tommy," he says long-sufferingly. Tommy laughs.

With that, Tommy leaves, and Tubbo lets his shoulders finally slump down. They both stay quiet for a long, long moment before Ranboo says quietly, "Tubbo..."

Tubbo breathes out, and forces his shoulders to straighten out again. "I'm fine, Ranboo."

For some reason, that makes Ranboo flinch. "You don't- you don't have to be fine all the time," Ranboo says pleadingly. "Tubbo-"

"He deserves to rest," Tubbo whispers. "I'm not gonna ruin that."

Ranboo groans in frustration. "And you deserve to not have to shove your own feelings away, too!" Ranboo says passionately. Tubbo closes his eyes. He will not cry. He will not cry. He will not cry.

"I'll be fine," Tubbo says. "I'll be fine."

"Tubbo-"

"I think I'm gonna go to sleep now, Ranboo," Tubbo cuts off, feeling a pang of guilt at the way Ranboo's shoulders hunch up. He lets his tone soften, and murmurs, "Thanks for caring, Boo. I love you."

"...Love you too, Bee," Ranboo finally responds. Tubbo cracks a quick, small smile, and moves to hang up.

"Have a good rest of your day," Tubbo says. Ranboo gives him the smallest of smiles.

"Sleep well, Tubbo." With that, Tubbo hangs up.

When he falls asleep, his shoulders hang heavy.

-

The first sign Tommy gets that something's wrong is when Ranboo calls him right after he ends his stream.

Ranboo *rarely* calls his phone. They talk all the time through discord, DMing almost constantly and on call whenever they can be, but they almost never use their actual phones. So when Ranboo's contact lights up Tommy's screen, Tommy instantly feels a little wary.

Still, he can't imagine it's too serious, so he answers with a cheery, "Hey, Ranboo! What's up?"

"Tommy," Ranboo says seriously. His voice is shaky. Tommy immediately straightens up, heart dropping slightly. "Tommy, you need to get to Tubbo."

"What's wrong?" Tommy asks, dread pooling in his stomach. He and Tubbo had literally been together *yesterday*- he knew that they were doing the whole execution of Techno thing today, but he didn't think it was that bad emotionally for Tubbo.

Ranboo groans frustratedly. "I *knew*- I knew this wasn't a good idea," he mutters, almost as if to himself. "He-" Ranboo sighs, then, and whispers softly, "Tommy, he went to visit you."

Tommy's stomach *drops*. "What...what do you mean?" Tommy asks shakily.

"Tubbo went to visit," Ranboo repeats, "And he saw your tower. And-" Ranboo cuts himself off, and when he continues, he sounds like he's on the verge of tears. "I tried calling him after his stream - he ended the stream *immediately*, but he won't pick up. I tried so many times, and-"

Ranboo snuffles, and he says heartbreakingly, "I don't know what to *do*."

Tommy can barely think. He- he never knew- he never knew that Tubbo saw it. He never-

"*Fuck*," Tommy curses, bursting into motion. He slips on his shoes and grabs his jacket, muttering, "I'll go see him, Ranboo."

Ranboo says quietly, "Okay. Thanks, Tommy."

"Thanks for letting me know, Ranboo," Tommy says, before he hangs up. "*Fuck*," he mutters to himself, dialing Tubbo and cursing when he doesn't pick up. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

He needs to be at Tubbo's house fucking *yesterday*.

-

Tubbo wakes up to pounding at his door.

He wasn't always a light sleeper, but ever since the war, and Pogtopia, and everything that followed after, he's had to be. And so when the first knock happens, even at the front door, Tubbo wakes up.

"*Toby! Tommy's here!*" Lani calls from downstairs, and Tubbo's instantly alert.

He glances at his phone, and- oh. Forty missed calls, most of them from Ranboo. Some from Tommy. All from after his stream- all from after he'd turned off his phone to just. Sleep.

He knew that seeing Tommy's tower, even in a video game, would be hard. He knew- he knew it would suck.

What he didn't know was that it would feel *just* like it did back then, and that when he sent his stream off to Phil, that he'd start crying then and there. He couldn't- he couldn't do it.

Fuck. Why are they doing this again? What's the fucking point?

Tubbo sighs, shoulders slumping. He'd decided to just...nap, after the stream, hoping it would help. Tommy'd been on the server still; Tubbo hadn't wanted to disturb him. So he fell asleep.

The last thing he expected was to wake up to Tommy fucking *being* here.

Tubbo barely has time to collect himself before Tommy's barging in the door. His eyes fall on Tubbo, and Tubbo doesn't know *what* he looks like, but Tommy's face just *crumples*. "Oh, Tubbo," he murmurs, before he brings Tubbo into a hug.

Melting into Tommy, Tubbo wraps his arms limply around Tommy's waist. Tommy doesn't say anything more. He just runs his fingers gently through Tubbo's hair, playing with the strands and massaging Tubbo's scalp. And slowly, slowly, slowly, the tension seeps out of him.

They just stand there for a while. It's comforting, having Tommy there, and- it doesn't make it much better, not really, not when he knows he's going to have nightmares about Tommy being gone yet again, but it helps. "I'm- I'm sorry." Tubbo blinks and looks up at Tommy; Tommy looks painfully guilty. "I didn't realize you'd seen it," Tommy whispers.

Tubbo leans back, and searches Tommy's face. "I told you I thought you were dead," he whispers, a miserable tinge to it. Tommy's face just falls even more.

"I always-" Tommy takes a shuddering breath in, and continues shakily, "I always thought Dream fuckin' just told you some- some bullshit when I went missing, not that-"

Tommy cuts himself off, and tugs Tubbo close again. "I never thought you saw it back then," he chokes out. Tubbo shoves his face into Tommy's chest to hide his tears. Ender, he never wanted to be reminded of that horrible, horrible day.

They're too sucked into the story now, though, Tubbo thinks bitterly. Nowhere they can go now but forward.

"Are we really gonna keep doing this?" Tommy asks once they've moved to the bed, Tommy still keeping Tubbo cradled against him. It feels safe. Tubbo sighs, bone deep and heavy.

"Do we really have a choice?" Tubbo mumbles in response. "It's all planned out- everyone's counting on us."

Tommy lets out a breath. He sounds just as tired as Tubbo feels. "No, I guess we don't," he says quietly. "Fuck, I hate this."

"...I know," Tubbo responds. "I know."

Tommy stays over, that night.

Tubbo still wakes up shaking from nightmares, but it still helps.

-

The next day, after Tommy has to go home, they all get dragged into a call with Wilbur, Phil, and Techno. “You guys have been doing too much depressing stuff!” Wilbur greets them with, once they join the call. “You need some variety!”

Tubbo laughs a bit, sharing a startled-yet-amused look with Tommy. “What did you have in mind?” He asks. Wilbur and Phil both grin.

“What better way than Jackbox to make you feel better?” Phil suggests. Tubbo sinks into his chair, relieved for some reason.

Tommy grins, seemingly just as relieved. “You’re on,” he says challengingly. “I’m gonna kick all your asses.”

Techno chimes in, “I dunno, child, I’m pretty good at Jackbox.”

“But are you good *enough*,” Tubbo cuts off. Techno responds with a dry retort, witty as always; Wilbur teases them all; Phil laughs. Tommy visibly brightens throughout the whole call, the shadows that had been starting to flit through his eyes again seeping away. And, Tubbo-

His shoulders feel lighter, now, too. He knows that there’s still so much that needs to happen, so much they still need to relive, but- it feels better, doing something like this. It reminds him that as much as the Dream SMP is a huge part of their lives, right now, it’s not real anymore. It’s in the past. They’re done with that part of their lives. They’re free of it, now. They’re alright.

They’re alright.

Chapter End Notes

thank you so much for reading, hope you enjoyed <3

also raise your hand if you're still freaking out about ranboo being in the uk again 🧑🏻

growing

Chapter Summary

The festival comes all too soon, Ranboo finds.

For the past couple of weeks, the streams have actually been *fun*. Tommy's free from exile, and Tubbo still can't stream with him as much, but they've been doing more stuff off of the Dream SMP, so he's been happier too. And when Ranboo's friends are happy, he's happy.

But it all had to come to an end eventually.

Chapter Notes

shout-out to plant, who kept me up until 2:30am and made me wake up 20 minutes before my first class, you're the real one

(i love you <3)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy hasn't laughed this hard watching a Dream SMP stream in a *long* time.

Dream and Techno decided to do this- this *bit* that's just Dream building a super *shitty* house, and Techno making fun of him. Tommy doesn't know *why* they decided to do this, but it's really fucking nice to watch after almost everything recently on the SMP has just brought Tommy or his friends pain.

The most recent streams have been better. Techno always manages to find ways to make Tommy laugh. Even though his character's more dry and uncaring than Techno would ever be, he still manages to bring a smile to Tommy's face as easily as he normally would.

Spending time with one of his friends and being out of exile on his stream- it's nice. And when Ranboo and Phil are there, too, it's even more fun. They basically just spend the whole time goofing off. Tommy can see Ranboo getting closer to Techno and Phil, too, which Tommy's glad about. It's about fucking time, when Ranboo's been a part of Tommy's family this whole time, and he should be included in Tommy's other family, too.

"Tommy, Ranboo- what are you two *doing?!?*"

Tommy stifles a laugh, glancing at Ranboo with his character before he faces Phil. He can't see Phil's face at all, but somehow he manages to get across that he's completely unimpressed anyway. "Nothing, Phil!" Tommy chirps.

Ranboo, struggling not to laugh, echoes, "Yeah, Phil, it's nothing. Don't worry about it."

"Uh-huh," Phil says doubtfully. He looks over towards his house, which- "*Why* is my house completely surrounded in glass?"

Tommy can't hold back his laughter anymore, and bursts out laughing. Ranboo's soon to follow. "Well," Tommy starts, a shit-eating grin on his face, "You're a bird."

"Yes?" Phil responds after Tommy trails off. "What does that have to do with this?"

"Birds can't see glass, right?" Tommy continues on, grin growing ever-wider.

Ranboo pipes in, "Yeah. You can't even see it right now!" Tommy stuffs a fist in his mouth to keep himself from laughing even *more*.

"...I literally can," Phil says disbelievingly.

"No, you can't!" Tommy refutes.

"Yes, I can."

"Nope!"

"Yup!"

"No- oh my god, I'm arguing with a couple of twelve-year-olds-" Phil cuts himself off. He sighs. "You two are little shits," he informs them. Tommy grins.

"We know!" They both manage to chorus at the same time. That's the moment that Techno comes back from- somewhere, fuck if Tommy knows where, and rejoins the call. Phil doesn't notice him, and asks incredulously, "Where did you even *get* that much glass?"

"Oh, yeah, I helped them," Techno answers casually.

Phil yells, "Are you *serious?!'*" and Tommy can't stop himself from bursting into laughter again.

-

The festival comes all too soon, Ranboo finds.

For the past couple of weeks, the streams have actually been *fun*. Tommy's free from exile, and Tubbo still can't stream with him as much, but they've been doing more stuff off of the Dream SMP, so he's been happier too. And when Ranboo's friends are happy, he's happy.

But it all had to come to an end eventually.

It's quiet for a while, when Ranboo joins the call with Tommy and Tubbo pre-festival. There's an anticipatory air, a feeling of dread hanging over all of them. Ranboo feels heavy, too. He isn't looking forward to this.

He's- he's been trying not to think about it. But- the festival was where Ranboo realized just how bad a friend he is. Was. He's not sure. The sight of Dream handing his book to Tubbo; of Tubbo reading it and realizing and giving Ranboo the most heartbroken look; of everyone *knowing* that Ranboo did horrible stuff- it still haunts him.

Ranboo knows it's in the past, but he still can't help but worry that this is gonna be when Tommy and Tubbo finally realize they're better off without him, after all.

"Guys." Tommy's voice breaks into Ranboo's thoughts, then. He looks up. Tommy looks determined – yet soft, at the same time. "Guys, it's going to be alright," Tommy reassures.

Tubbo's looking away from the screen when Ranboo glances at him, and Ranboo soon looks away, too, staring at his hands. Tommy sighs, and says, "Look, we all did stuff we regret, last time. But that's in the past now."

Ranboo takes in a shuddering breath, and looks up at Tommy. Tommy looks a little relieved, and he continues on, voice firm. "We overcame this, alright? We can't forget all that we went through, but we can't forget that we grew past this, too."

Tubbo lets out a sigh. "Yeah," he agrees quietly. Tommy gives him a quick, proud smile.

His eyes must shift towards Ranboo's screen, and he asks gently, "Ranboo?"

"...Yeah," Ranboo responds. Tubbo's eyes narrow a bit, but Tommy just smiles reassuringly.

"You're alright, Ranboo," he says soothingly. "You're alright."

Ranboo nods, looking down at his hands. He doesn't say anything more, something tight wound in his chest. Tommy takes in a deep breath, letting it out slowly. "No matter what happens," he says slowly, ever the leader, "All of this is in the past. Let's make sure we remember that."

"We will, Tommy," Ranboo says quietly. He carefully wraps up all his feelings, shoves them down deep and vows to ignore them until this shitshow is over. He's not the one that suffered the most during this time. He's not the one that had to fight his best friend; who had the home they built be destroyed. Tommy did. Tubbo did.

Ranboo can ignore his own problems for a while to give them what they need.

Tubbo nods to Tommy, his own gaze sharpening with resolve, and Tommy sits up straighter.

"Well, then let's get this show on the road."

-

The festival – well, in Tommy's humble opinion, it sucks *ass*.

Honestly, Tommy thought he was over all of this. He thought that he'd healed from exile, from everyone seeing him for the very first time after he was fucking thrown away and *hating* him. He thought- he thought he was over Dream accusing him, and everyone- and *Tubbo* believing him.

Apparently he hadn't.

The first part of the stream is fine. Tommy goofs off with Techno, trying his best to distract himself from what's going to happen. Techno seems to be trying to distract him, too, and when Ranboo comes to visit them, he crouches a bit at Tommy, as if checking to make sure Tommy's okay.

Tommy crouches back, and he's fine.

He's fine, up until- Dream starts yelling. Tommy braces himself, and it isn't enough.

For some reason- unlike any other moment, unlike even when he and Tubbo had re-acted out Tubbo *exiling* him, he falls back into the memory of this. It's like he's back then, backed into a corner and *begging* for anyone to believe him. But no one does, other than Techno. It helps, but- everyone's yelling at him, and *Tubbo's* yelling at him, and Tommy *can't*-

Tubbo yells something about the disks, and the words slip just as easily off of Tommy's lips. "The *disks*- the disks were worth more than you *ever* were!"

Instantly, he rears back, his heart stopping. He- he didn't mean that. He didn't-

He just barely can hear a shaky – too shaky – breath from the other end, and he knows that it's Tubbo's. Regret weighs heavy on Tommy's shoulders. He can't- why the fuck did he feel so *much* while saying that? He *never* believed that. He never-

Silently, Tommy moves over to Tubbo's side. He wishes this were real life, so he could hold Tubbo's hand. "I'm sorry," he whispers. It's not just for the story anymore. Tommy bites his lip – he can't *believe* he fucking *said* it like *that* – and says louder, "Give him the disk, Tubbo."

Tubbo hesitates for a second, looking between Dream and Tommy a couple of times. It's the first time his character has moved since Tommy yelled at him. Silently, he moves towards Dream and throws him the disk.

When he returns to Tommy's side, he nods his character's head towards him. And, the entirety of the rest of the stream, Tommy doesn't let himself stray too far from Tubbo's side, other than the very end when they're planning out everything. He acts his part, he rallies everyone. And when...when he pulls Tubbo away, intent on apologizing, it's just like before.

He can't find the words. And so he tells Tubbo, "Later," and they split off then and there.

Tubbo mutters a soft, "Okay." He's quiet. He's too quiet.

Tommy ends his stream soon after. He rests his head in his hands, mumbling, "*Fuck*," into his hands.

He needs to apologize. He needs- he needs to.

And so he tabs over to Tubbo and Ranboo's streams, and settles in to wait until they're finished. When they're done, and they can talk, Tommy will fix this.

He will.

-

Tubbo didn't expect it to hurt as bad as it did.

Intellectually, he knew that Tommy would have to say the words again. And he knew that Tommy doesn't mean them. He *knew* that. But- hearing the words again, *feeling* the vitriol spat off of Tommy's lips, it- it fucking hurt. It hurt so bad.

He knows he fucked up, back then. Being reminded of how much he hurt Tommy, of how he *deserved* to be yelled at like that, it hurts more than he could've imagined.

It's robotic, how Tubbo finishes his stream. He's in a haze the whole time, it feels like – just going through the motions. It already happened, after all. He knows the script. He knows what part to play. He knows how to play it. There is a moment, though, when he *feels* again.

Tubbo forgave Quackity for this, but he never *once* forgot that he once wanted to execute Ranboo. Quackity was so *adamant* that they make the same mistakes that the previous administration did; that they kill the one who gave so *fucking* much for their country. Ranboo cares so *fucking* much, and Tubbo wasn't even that close to Ranboo, the first time this happened.

He knows Quackity's just playing a part, but he can't stop himself from fucking *yelling* when Quackity makes his suggestion, his blood boiling. He- he can't imagine what would've happened, if Ranboo didn't make it past that day.

Tubbo would've probably died alongside Tommy, that day. He never would've adopted Michael, never would've laughed and smiled as much as he does with his husband. Tommy's amazing, and Tubbo loves him more than life itself, but Ranboo's irreplaceable. Tubbo loves him just as much, too.

He'll never give him up.

It doesn't take long, after that confrontation, for Tubbo to fall back into his haze. He- he's not numb, not really, but he's almost there. The confrontation helps distract him, but...he can't stop playing the words through his head.

"The disks were worth more than you ever were!"

He knows Tommy doesn't believe that, now. But, at one point, he did.

It hurts.

His voice is much too shaky when he talks to Tommy that last time on-stream. He tries so hard to hide how much he's been affected, but he has no doubt Tommy's noticed.

That thought's only confirmed when Tubbo finally ends his stream, and instantly Tommy's calling their group chat. Ranboo's already in there. Tubbo- Tubbo needs to join. Tubbo takes a deep, shuddering breath in, and lets it out.

And he joins the call.

-

Tommy's apologizing the instant Tubbo and Ranboo join the call.

"Tubbo, I'm *so* fucking sorry," Tommy says, leaning forward in his seat. Tubbo's shoulders hunch in slightly. The guilt just builds in Tommy- *jesus christ*, how can he call himself Tubbo's best friend if he does shit like *this*?

Fuck, he really never stops hurting Tubbo, does he.

Tubbo shrugs miserably. "Had to say it, didn't you?" Tubbo mutters quietly. His eyes flick up towards the camera. "It's okay."

"No- no, it's not." Tommy shakes his head, and says passionately, "Tubbo, you- you deserved better than that. I- I got too into it. I shouldn't have, and I'm so sorry about that."

Tubbo remains quiet. Tommy's eyes flick over to Ranboo's camera – as if he knows Tommy's looking, Ranboo gives the barest hint of a small, encouraging smile. He's looking worn-down, too. Tommy makes a mental note to check in on him later.

Tubbo's still quiet. Tommy says pleadingly, "Tubbo- you have to know that I- I didn't mean it. You- you have to know that."

Bowing his head, Tubbo plays with his headphone cord. "...Yeah," Tubbo agrees. Barely above a breath, Tubbo whispers, "But you did, at some point." He sounds so quiet. So small. So desperately *alone*.

Tommy's breath hitches; his blood freezes in his veins. "No," he breathes. Then, stronger, "No! Tubbo, I- I *never* meant it. Not really."

Tubbo actually looks up at that, eyes wide. "Tubbo," Tommy whispers, horrified. "Did you- have you thought, all this time, that I meant it?"

Tubbo's silence speaks volumes.

Tommy's heart *breaks*.

"*Fuck*- Tubbo, I-" Tommy cuts himself off, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath in; taking his time. He has to be careful about this. He has to say the right thing. "Tubbo, that day- remember how I said that I was becoming a shit person?"

He waits for a response, hands clenching desperately at his armrests. After what feels like an eternity, Tubbo nods the slightest amount. Tommy breathes a slight sigh of relief, and continues, “That’s- Tubbo, I said that because if I was in my right mind, I *never* would’ve said that.”

“It was true, though,” Tubbo breaks in softly, and- no.

“No,” Tommy says, firm. “No, Tubbo, I- Tubbo. Tubbo, look at me.”

Tommy waits until Tubbo’s looking full-on at the screen, and continues, his own eyes locked with his camera. “Tubbo, you are the single *most* important person in my life. I- when I said that, I didn’t mean it. You’ve *always* been worth more than those disks- they were so important to me because *we* went through so much together for them. They represented *us*.”

Tubbo’s breath catches. Tommy presses on. “Tubbo, I always have and always will love you *so* much more than I love those stupid disks. They don’t even hold a *candle* to you. You’re worth a million of those. I- I love you so fucking much, okay?”

A silence falls between them. Tommy looks back to Tubbo, waiting with bated breath for *any* sort of response. Tubbo’s just...staring, before, finally-

He breaks.

Tommy’s heart shatters just a little bit more as Tubbo lets out a cut-off sob. He shoves a hand over his own mouth, looking away and attempting to muffle his cries. He fails, and Tommy holds his own hand over his chest, gripping at his shirt as if that’d help with the ache stabbing at his heart. “I wish I could hug you,” he murmurs softly. Tubbo laughs, choked-sounding but genuine. The tension in Tommy’s shoulders eases the smallest amount.

“I wish, too,” Tubbo responds in a voice barely above a whisper. For probably the hundredth time, Tommy curses the fact that they weren’t born next-door neighbors; that Tommy can’t go over to his house whenever he wants and give him a fucking hug.

“After the stream tomorrow, I’m coming over,” Tommy promises. “I- I’ll be there.”

Tubbo wraps his arms around himself. He still looks so *small*. “Okay,” he whispers. “...I love you, Tommy.”

“I love you, too.” Tommy glances at Ranboo- fuck, he looks so heartbreakingly *proud* of them. Tommy says, “Love you both so, so much.”

Tubbo grins the faintest amount. “Yeah, love you, Boo,” he whispers.

Ranboo startles a bit, then goes soft. “Love you two,” he says. “I wish-” he snuffles, scrubbing an arm across his eyes. Tommy’s blood goes cold, and he sits up straighter.

“You alright, Ranboo?” Tubbo asks, worried. Ranboo just laughs a little, voice wet.

“Yeah, I just-” his voice cracks, and he says softly, “I just miss you guys so much. You- I wanna hug you guys so bad.”

A knot forms in Tommy's throat. Tears burn at the backs of his eyes, and he says, "Yeah. Ender, yeah, same here, Ran."

"Someday," Tubbo says firmly. His voice barely shakes. He's always been able to push his own feelings aside for others. "We'll be able to hug someday. Just wait for us, okay?"

Ranboo laughs, bitterness threading through his tone. "It's gonna take a while, guys." He seems to shake himself, then, and brushes off, "Whatever, it doesn't matter." He peers at them, and says, "You two- you two be sure to take care of each other, alright? I'm fine."

Tommy narrows his eyes, something cold settling into his gut. "Ranboo-"

"I'm *fine*," Ranboo stresses. His voice drops into something a little more soothing, and he continues, "I'll- I'll be alright. You two need to sleep soon, right? It's late."

Tubbo and Tommy share a look – well, as much as they can when they're not in person – and Tubbo sighs. "Yeah, we should." He narrows his eyes, then, and says, "Remember we're here, too, Boo, even if we can't be there in person."

"You're not allowed to forget that," Tommy breaks in threateningly. Ranboo rolls his eyes and chuckles.

"I know," he reassures. "Sleep well, guys."

"...See you later," Tommy whispers, before he leaves the call.

-

When Tommy arrives at Tubbo's after doomsday, Tubbo's waiting for him.

Without a word, Tubbo drags him into a hug. Tommy's unresisting, and rests his head on Tubbo's. He ignores the wetness seeping into his chest, just as Tubbo doesn't comment on the tears no-doubt dropping into his hair.

Re-living Doomsday had been...hard. It wasn't the same. Nothing could compare to feeling the TNT blowing up around them, and nothing hurt quite as much as Tubbo throwing himself in front of Tommy to protect him from a firework from fucking *Technoblade* again. It hurt, though, remembering it all.

Tommy always avoided going to the crater for exactly this reason.

The one single moment of levity had been when Tommy had fucking *died*. Because of *lightning*. It had honestly been fucking hilarious – Tommy'd been bracing himself, because Wilbur- Ghostbur- had just asked to be brought back to life. He'd been readying himself for reliving one of the most emotionally-charged conversations of his life, when-

Boom. Dead.

It was a nice little chance to catch his breath in a moment where Tommy'd been getting dangerously close to crying.

Still, it hadn't taken long for Tommy to fall into a sort of slump. The stream hadn't lasted much longer after that, and Tommy'd hopped on the train soon after. But...the train ride gave Tommy a lot of time to think. To reflect. And, of course the one moment he couldn't stop thinking about was them singing the anthem again.

And *fuck*, if Tommy doesn't miss L'Manberg.

It's been almost two decades at this point. L'Manberg was gone long before Tommy died, but...it's always hard, remembering what L'Manberg used to be. He misses- he misses Wilbur, and Fundy, and even Eret- he misses how *happy* he could be, and Tubbo could be, back in the first few weeks of their nation.

Tommy wouldn't trade away his friends in this world for the world- wouldn't trade away Wilbur and his unreasonably soothing smiles, Fundy and his sarcastic quips, Eret and their laughing praise. He wouldn't trade away his, Tubbo's, and Ranboo's second chance for anything. But...he can't help but miss it, sometimes.

That was his first real family, and he misses it.

Tommy lets out a bit of a sigh, squeezing Tubbo before leaning back. "You doing alright?" He murmurs. Tubbo scrubs his arm across his face, sniffing slightly before he meets Tommy's eyes.

"...Not really," Tubbo admits. "But I will be."

Tommy's heart squeezes, and he brings Tubbo into another hug. "You okay?" Tubbo mutters into Tommy's shirt. Tommy hums a bit, thinking it over.

Today sucked. Yesterday and today were honestly some the days that made Tommy feel worst. But...

He has Tubbo. He has Ranboo. He has Wilbur and Phil and Techno, and Dream, and all their other friends. He *knows*, now, how much he's loved. No one here hates him, no one here wants to hurt him or kill him.

He's safe, he's here, and he's home.

"I will be," he answers Tubbo quietly. And he knows it's true.

-

"Hey- Ranboo, mate, you alright?"

Ranboo makes his character glance up at the sound of Phil's voice, raising his eyebrows behind the screen. He's just been...kinda hanging out by the crater, ever since the final explosions ceased. Tommy and Tubbo had been in a different VC, and Ranboo wouldn't be surprised if Tommy was already on his way down to Tubbo's house. He thinks their streams have ended, at least.

It only makes sense that they wouldn't talk to him beforehand, but it still stings a little bit.

“H- Hey, Phil,” Ranboo greets. “I’m- I’m okay.”

He stares sullenly at the remains of his house, and Phil lets out a little bit of a sympathetic hum. “Do you have anywhere to go?” Phil asks, gentle. Ranboo closes his eyes briefly-ender, this is just like what happened last time. Ranboo’s heart squeezes in the *exact* same way as *before*.

“My house got blown up,” he tells Phil quietly, reopening his eyes. Phil hums again as Techno tridents over to them.

“Would you like to come live with us?” Phil asks.

Ranboo pauses.

They hadn’t really planned this out, before the stream. Ranboo hasn’t talked to Phil and Techno a ton since joining the server, but he does know that Tommy and Tubbo *adore* them. And- talking to them more sounds really nice, and Ranboo did join them in the previous timeline, so, well. There’s really nothing he can do but go with them this time, too.

“...Yeah, alright,” Ranboo responds. He can’t see Phil, but he can remember the exact smile he had on his face when Ranboo’d agreed last time. Ranboo follows after them.

And, even though they’re hardly there in real life, the lonely vice around his heart eases, just the slightest bit.

-

“Tubbo, fuck *off!*”

Tubbo cackles at Wilbur. “Sucks to suck!” He crows. “Pick up your-” Tubbo cuts himself off, laughing- “*Eighteen* cards, Wilbur!”

Wilbur grumbles, “I hate you so fucking much,” but concedes and grabs his cards. “Can’t believe this online version of UNO allows fucking stacking,” Wilbur complains. Tommy’s distinct laugh comes through, and when Tubbo glances over at his other screen, Tommy’s grinning delightedly.

“Looks like you’ve just gotta be better, Wilbur!” He says, grinning. Wilbur sighs long-sufferingly.

“Ranboo, you’re my favorite child,” Wilbur says. Tubbo gasps in offense.

“How *dare* you!”

Ranboo shrugs. His grin is sheepish, though, and Tubbo smiles a little wider at the fact that Ranboo’s getting dragged into their little family, too. Good. It’s about time. “Guess I’m just more likeable,” Ranboo says cheekily.

Tommy sighs. “Guess we’ve gotta up our game, Tubbo,” he says. Tubbo shakes his head in mock-disappointment.

“Guess we do- wait, hold on, never mind, it’s my turn again.”

“Tubbo, I swear to god, do *not*-”

“Sorry, Wilbur!” Tubbo beams innocently, and places down another two plus-fours. “Draw twelve, Wilbur!” Wilbur’s quiet.

In the next instant, he leaves the call, and it’s just the three of them.

It’s silent, for a brief second, and then they all *burst* into laughter.

-

“Techno, you are quite simply the worst person.”

Ranboo stifles a laugh as Techno responds dryly, “It’s not your fault both you and Tubbo *still* suck at Skywars. Me and Ranboo are just too good.”

Tubbo grumbles, clearly salty at being knocked into the void, “Okay, mister potatoes.”

“Tubbo, that wasn’t at all a good insult.”

“Shut *up*, Potato Head!”

“Congrats, you’ve graduated from second-grade humor to fifth-grade humor. Well done.”

“Mimimimimi, I’m Technoblade and I love killing children! It’s my favorite hobby! Just shut *up*, man!”

Techno just sighs in response, and knocks the last living person into the void. “Yay,” he says dryly. A little more genuinely, he adds on, “Good job, Ranboo.”

Ranboo flushes a bit, responding, “Thanks, you- you too.” It’s a little weird, still, being included in moments like these. Ever since he reunited with Tommy and Tubbo, he’s noticed how close they are with the rest of the Sleepy Bois, as the fans say. He’d kinda expected to be on the fringes – they couldn’t be expected to change their whole dynamic because of Ranboo suddenly intruding on their lives – but instead, Tommy and Tubbo seem to be determined to include him in everything they do, too.

Well, of course not everything, but enough that Ranboo can almost-confidently say that all three of them are Ranboo’s friends, too. It’s nice. It’s really nice.

He never really got to know Wilbur in the past timeline as he was before- everything; same with Phil and Techno, but...he can see why Tommy loved Wilbur so much, now. And Ranboo missed *his* Phil and Techno a lot, too, even though they hurt his friends an unbearable amount. He hasn’t forgiven them for that, but *this* Phil and Techno are the best of Ranboo’s old friends.

Ender, he’s lucky to have another chance like this.

They're all quiet for a bit, Tommy still grumbling, and Ranboo asks, "Another game?"

"Yes," Tommy says vehemently. "Techno, I'm knocking your dumb ass into the fucking void as soon as I can."

"No, I am!" Tubbo argues.

Techno cuts off the ensuing argument and just responds amusedly, "You can try, gremlin children." He sounds fond. Ranboo stifles a bit of a smile as he joins the lobby – Tommy and Tubbo both deserve to have Techno love him like this.

In the end, though, it's Ranboo that ends up knocking Tubbo off into the void.

"Ranboo, my beloved," Tubbo says sweetly immediately after. Ranboo can't help but feel horribly, terribly threatened.

"Yes, Tubbo?" He answers hesitantly.

"I am going to teleport into your house and steal your kidneys."

A pause, and then-

All of them burst into laughter. Tommy's laughing the loudest of all of them, but then his laugh rapidly cuts off into a scream. "Techno, you *bitch!*" He shouts. Ranboo just sighs as he sees Tommy's death notification in the chat.

"You both really do suck at this," he says, amused.

"Shut *up*, Ranboo!" Ranboo just cackles.

It's the lightest he's felt in ages.

-

Ranboo slowly, slowly, slowly feels himself being dragged into the dynamic that Tubbo and Tommy have with Phil, Techno, and Wilbur. It's not the same, while he's there, but- he can't really expect it to be. he's a different person, after all.

But- it's nice, being friends with all of them. His and Wilbur's new favorite thing becomes going onto Phil's streams and being absolute menaces – Ranboo uses his new privileges to talk through the donation screen on Phil's streams, and Wilbur responds the same way. They hold whole conversations through that medium. Ranboo finds joy in being as obnoxious as possible, and just being *sighed* at. Wilbur encourages it and is honestly worse than Ranboo is.

Ranboo was never allowed to be like this, before.

Speaking of Phil, he seems to have taken over being Ranboo's internet parent. He gives Ranboo advice whenever he needs it, and if he notices Ranboo being up ridiculously late, he gently nudges him to go to sleep; to take care of himself. He's far from being overbearing.

He's just...there. He's there, like almost no one has been before. He's protective of him; he cares about him with no strings attached.

It's unlike anything Ranboo's experienced before.

And, honestly, Techno becomes one of Ranboo's closest friends. They're in the same timezone, so whenever Ranboo wants – whenever the loneliness from being across the sea from his best friends becomes too overbearing – he can go to Techno. Techno distracts him, playing with him on Hypixel or goofing off on the Dream SMP with him. And, quickly enough, Ranboo just starts going to him just to talk and hang out. He has the best stories, Ranboo learns. He's just fun to talk to.

It's better than anything Ranboo had in the *before*, other than the moments with his best friends. And he prizes those, he really does, but-

This life is so much better than Ranboo could've imagined.

Still- Ranboo can feel, slowly creeping up on him, the guilt, and fear, and misery that he's managed to push away until now. He hadn't really had to think about it until the festival, but-

He betrayed Tommy and Tubbo. There's no denying that, and...the thought that he once hurt his best friends and caused them *so* much of the horror in their lives- it aches. And- Ranboo doesn't remember *so much*, still. He never found his fourth book. He never found out if- if he did work with Dream, not for sure.

The not knowing...it's almost worse than if he'd have known all this time. He can't know if he did do those things. Not really. Not unless- not unless something comes up in *this* storyline that matches with what they all remember from before, and it reveals that Ranboo didn't do those things – or if he did.

And Ranboo's always been a good improviser. He's always been able to remember where the story's going and react accordingly. But...when Ranboo streams, he's not really acting. Those moments in the panic room, with nothing but his thoughts and Dream's voice in his ears, it's like he's back *there*, back when he didn't know who he could trust and if he, himself, was a person anyone could be safe around.

He rambles and talks around himself and brings himself close to tears multiple times. He- he doesn't mean to, but a lot of the stuff- it comes out true. Genuine.

Tommy and Tubbo call him after almost every stream, reassuring him.

We don't care, Tommy says passionately. *You're still you*, Tubbo reassures. Ranboo smiles, in the moment, and lets their words set his heart at ease.

An hour later, every time, the feeling fades, and he feels just as uncertain as he did before they reached out.

Also- he and Dream have started to coordinate lore at some point, and- the thing that hurts the most is how *excited* Dream sounds about what Ranboo has planned. And the thing that

freaks him out, too, is how Dream's suggestions fit in so cleanly to what- to what happened, before. It's a little scary, how their improv matches so well to what Ranboo remembers his hallucinated voice being like.

Ranboo tries not to let it affect him, but it does, sometimes. He shoves everything down deep, though, and just keeps on going. He's fine. He's fine.

He's fine.

Chapter End Notes

:)

get ready

catalyst

Chapter Summary

Ranboo snorts, eyeing Tubbo. “Tubbo, what was that dancing during when Wilbur was talking to Tommy?” He asks amusedly. Tubbo cracks up, while Tommy raises his eyebrows, eyes flickering from side to side as if bouncing between their screens.

“What dancing?” Tommy asks. Tubbo just cracks up more.

“When you and Wilbur were yelling,” Ranboo says, a grin tugging at his lips, “Tubbo just- Tubbo just started *dancing* along to whatever disk was playing. It was hilarious.”

Tommy starts giggling then, too, and says, “*Really*, Tubbo?”

Tubbo just grins innocently. “It’s a good song!”

“Yeah, but still- I’m here, having this yelling match with Wil, and you’re just *dancing?!?*”

“What else am I supposed to do?!” Tubbo asks incredulously. Ranboo cackles, his grin splitting his face.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The Disk War Finale comes quicker than any of them thought it would. Ranboo can’t help but be worried about Tommy and Tubbo – he knows that this confrontation was one of the most intense moments of their past life. But...

Honestly, they both seem like they’re alright. Ranboo had been especially worried about Tubbo, because, well, he almost died. Of course he’d be worried. But, surprisingly, Tubbo’s the one who seems the least affected by everything. He goes through the stream, joking around with Tommy the whole time, and he barely seems shaken when they call after the whole thing.

Still, Ranboo can’t help but ask, “Tubbo, you doing alright?” Tubbo blinks at him; Tommy, who’d been zoned out, seems to refocus.

Tubbo says, “I’m fine, bossman!”

“Tubbo, really,” Tommy breaks in. He *does* look a little shaken; Ranboo hopes he’s okay. He’ll check up on him next. “Are you *really* okay?”

This time, Tubbo actually takes a moment to think. But, he replies again, “I really am alright, guys. It-” Tubbo cuts himself off, swallowing slightly. “It was a little scary, and Dream’s a *really* fucking good actor, but...”

He shrugs a little, looking embarrassed. “I dunno, for some reason I was alright, this time. Probably because...well, I knew I was safe, this time.”

Tommy’s face crumples a bit, but a fond smile emerges soon after. “Yeah?” Tommy asks in a murmur.

“Yeah.” And, because Tubbo’s apparently decided it’s honesty hours, Tubbo says softly, “It made it a lot better, having you two there with me.”

Ranboo’s heart squeezes. “I’m glad,” he whispers. Tommy laughs a bit, swiping at his eyes.

“Finally sunk in that we’re safe here, huh?” He asks, seeming to aim for teasing. It comes out more affectionate than anything. Tubbo laughs a bit, smile perking up.

“Yeah. Dream talking to us beforehand helped, too.”

Ranboo furrows his brows. “Dream talked to you guys before?” He questions. Tommy and Tubbo both nod.

“Yeah, he just like- reassured us and shit,” Tommy picks up, running a hand through his hair. “Apparently people have noticed how shaken we get sometimes after streams, so they’re taking even more care to make sure we’re alright with everything,” he laughs.

Shaking his head, Ranboo chuckles. “I’m glad,” he says. Then, voice dropping into something more sincere, “You guys deserve it.”

Tubbo and Tommy both flush, pleased smiles on their faces. Ranboo stifles a bit of a snicker-man, it’s always great when he can fluster the both of them at once. It’s so *easy*, too.

His eyes flicker over to Tommy. “Tommy, you’re doing okay too, right?”

A frown flashes across Tommy’s face for a brief second. He seems to be debating with himself, biting his bottom lip. “...Tubbo,” he finally starts, “You’re-”

Tommy cuts himself off. Ranboo’s heart drops and Tubbo’s eyes widen with concern as Tommy bites his lip harder. “You don’t believe any of that stuff anymore, do you?” He asks in a whisper.

Tubbo’s brows furrow. “Any of the-” He starts, and Tommy interrupts him.

“The like- stuff about being a pawn, and you having no choice but to give up, and- like- not being worth anything and-” Tommy exclaims, hands waving around wildly. “Yeah,” he finishes, breathing out shakily and looking down at his hands.

Tubbo’s face drops in realization. “Oh,” he breathes. His voice grows soft. “No, Tommy, I don’t,” he says reassuringly. “Toms, can you look up for me?”

Tommy does, and Tubbo says, gentle, “Tommy, I haven’t believed any of that in a while.” His eyes flicker over to the side- Ranboo can’t know for sure, but he’d guess he’s looking at Ranboo’s picture on his screen. “You two have made it very clear that it’s not true,” he admits softly.

Tears prick at the back of Ranboo’s eyes. Tommy laughs fondly, dabbing at his eyes again. “I’m glad,” he whispers.

“Yeah,” Ranboo agrees, swiping at his own eyes. A comfortable silence falls between them for a while. Then:

Ranboo snorts, eyeing Tubbo. “Tubbo, what was that dancing during when Wilbur was talking to Tommy?” He asks amusedly. Tubbo cracks up, while Tommy raises his eyebrows, eyes flickering from side to side as if bouncing between their screens.

“What dancing?” Tommy asks. Tubbo just cracks up more.

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“Yeah, but still- I’m here, having this yelling match with Wil, and you’re just *dancing*?!”

“What else am I supposed to do?!” Tubbo asks incredulously. Ranboo cackles, his grin splitting his face.

“I dunno- not that?!”

“Fuck you! I do what I want!”

Tommy rears back, gasping exaggeratedly. “No, fuck *you*!” He retorts.

“Both of you are stupid,” Ranboo cuts in dryly.

“Shut up, Ranboo.”

There’s a quiet, and then-

All three of them burst into laughter. “Ender, I’m so glad that fucking war’s done,” Tommy says, still laughing. “I’m so done with it.”

“Fucking mood,” Tubbo agrees, leaning back in his seat. He then says, “Now we get to fuck around in Snowchester, Ranboo- oh! Do you think we’ll find Michael again?”

Ranboo’s heart grows soft at the excitement in Tubbo’s tone, and he replies, “Maybe. Hopefully. We probably will, honestly, given how most big things have lined up pretty well.”

His eyes flick towards Tommy for a moment. If...if things do continue lining up, Tommy being trapped in the prison is probably going to come up again. Ranboo hopes it doesn't. Ender, Ranboo really hopes that it doesn't come to pass again. Tommy deserves to finally have *peace*.

Ranboo doesn't bring it up. If it does end up happening again, Tommy deserves to at least have the time before it happens to be happy.

They both deserve to be happy.

Tubbo, bringing Ranboo out of his thoughts, chirps, "Good! I miss him!" Ranboo's heart squeezes.

"Yeah," he whispers. "I do too."

"I miss that little rascal, too," Tommy sighs, spinning around in his chair and staring at the ceiling. He's quiet for a moment. "I'm glad he survived everything," he whispers. Ranboo swallows, lump in his throat.

Ranboo agrees quietly, "Yeah." *I wish all of us could've, too*, he doesn't say, but the way Tubbo slumps in his seat betrays he probably feels the same way.

He wouldn't give up this second chance for the world, but ender if Ranboo doesn't wish things had gone different in the before. Tommy and Tubbo deserved better than what they got. They deserved to be *happy*, not...not what they got.

Heart aching, Ranboo breathes out shallowly and pushes that aside, and refocuses on the present. What's in the past doesn't matter. What's in the *now* does.

Tubbo lets out a breath, sitting up. "We should probably go to sleep," he mutters, rubbing at his eyes.

Ranboo glances at the clock. "Yeah, it's almost two in the morning for you two," Ranboo says.

Tommy whines, "But I'm not tired!" A yawn interrupts him midway, though, completely contradicting his point. Tubbo and Ranboo both stifle giggles. Tommy glares at them – tiredly, Ranboo notes with amusement – and tells them, "Shut the fuck up."

"Okay, Tommy," Ranboo agrees easily enough. He goes quiet for a moment, then says, "I'm proud of you guys."

Tubbo and Tommy both go scarlet, fidgeting in their seats. Ranboo's smile grows a little bit larger – he always loves complimenting his friends. They always react in the most hilarious of ways. "Love you, Boo," Tubbo replies, still a little flustered.

Tommy recovers, saying, "Ranboo on his cheesy arc, I see." His tone grows the slightest bit softer. "Love you, dumbass."

"Love you, too," Ranboo responds instantly. "G'night, guys. Sleep well."

“G’night!” Tubbo chirps, signing off. Tommy gives a salute and one final grin, and leaves as well. And Ranboo settles back in his seat, heart warm.

-

When Ranboo wakes up, he’s shaking.

All he can do is just- lie there, for a second. His breathing’s coming in quick, shallow gasps – he can’t seem to get enough air in. His chest *aches*; he holds a hand against his chest, and tries to calm down.

Ender, it *hurts*.

He closes his eyes, and instantly, the contents of his dreams- *nightmares*- come back. He sees Tommy dead, and Tubbo, and Michael- sees *himself*, out of control and unaware, blowing up the Community House and hiding Tommy’s disk and- and him helping Dream, and he *can’t*-

Desperate for *any* sort of distraction, he grabs for his phone and opens Discord.

Instantly, seeing Tommy and Tubbo online helps. They’re- they’re still here. They’re alive, and they’re here. Well...not *here*, not really, but that can’t happen for a long time anyway. This is the best Ranboo’s going to be able to get for a while.

Part of him eases, and he settles back into his mattress. His heartrate gradually slows, and the ache in his chest dissipates. He forces himself to take slow, deep breaths, and finally, finally, he feels better.

Still- the possibilities- he can’t stop *thinking* about them.

He could’ve done so *much* to hurt his friends- he already knows he likely helped with burning the Community House, and he found Tommy’s disk that one time, and- who knows what else he could’ve done.

Ranboo lets out a whimper, pressing his palms against his eyelids and breathing in deep. He won’t cry. He *won’t cry*.

Ender, with Dream in the prison, it’s like everything that Ranboo’s been trying to shove down comes roaring back. All his fears, all his worst insecurities, just coming back out into the open. He hates it, he *hates* it, but he just can’t make it stop.

He *hates it*.

A ping sounds from his phone. Ranboo removes his palms, blinking his tears away, and glances down.

Ah. It’s from Tubbo.

hey bossman :D why’re you awake?

Ranboo can't bring himself to respond. He just...stares at the phone, typing on and off for a bit, knot in his throat growing ever larger. And, like Tubbo sensed Ranboo's indecision, he sends another message.

call?

Swallowing, Ranboo moves to press the call button and presses his phone to his ear.

Tubbo picks up instantly. "Hey, bossman," he greets. "You alright?"

Ranboo doesn't answer. *Can't* answer. His next breath comes out shaky, and he can hear Tubbo's sharp inhale of breath from the other end. "Hey, Boo," Tubbo says, voice gone gentle. "I'm just gonna talk for a little while, okay? I'll just talk. You don't have to say anything. I'll be here."

And- this is why Ranboo adores Tubbo so much. He *always* seems to know exactly what Ranboo needs, whether he can talk or not, whether he just needs someone *there* for him to talk to when he's ready. For the next little while, Tubbo rambles about how much he misses MCC, and what he wants to do for lunch that day, and what he had for lunch *yesterday*, and slowly, Ranboo feels the knot in his throat lessen.

He lets out a slow, controlled breath, and Tubbo goes quiet for a moment. "Hey, Tubbo," Ranboo finally whispers.

"Hey there, Ranboo," Tubbo says, sounding relieved. "You alright, bossman?"

Tears prick at the backs of Ranboo's eyes at just how *careful* Tubbo sounds. "I'm-" Ranboo's breath catches, and he scrubs the back of his arm across his eyes impatiently. "I'm alright, now."

Tubbo's quiet. "You wanna talk about it?" He asks softly. Ranboo shakes his head, before remembering that Tubbo can't see it.

"No," he whispers. And, because it'll fluster Tubbo and because it'll distract him and because it's true, Ranboo adds on, "You just being here helps."

Tubbo lets out a little laugh. "You're too sweet, sometimes," he says affectionately. Ranboo smiles the slightest amount.

"It's true," he states.

"Seriously, though." Tubbo's voice grows more serious, and he tells Ranboo, "Just know you can talk to me – to us – about anything, remember?"

Ranboo softens. "I know, Tubbo. Don't worry."

There's a moment of quiet. Ranboo knows Tubbo's considering his words; hopefully he hid the small amount of lingering fear well enough. "Good," Tubbo finally responds. "You should try to sleep again, Boo."

“I know,” Ranboo sighs, leaning back into his pillows again. “I just-”

Ranboo cuts himself off, biting his lower lip. He doesn’t...he doesn’t wanna see those images again. Dreams, memories, whatever they are- he doesn’t want to see them. Tubbo hums sympathetically, and he asks in a low, careful tone, “You want me to stay on call with you? I’ll keep it down.” Tubbo’s voice quiets even more, and he says, “I can- I can stay if you don’t want to be alone.”

Ender.

Ranboo lets out a bit of a laugh, pressing his palm against his face. Ender, what did he do to deserve friends- deserve a *husband*- like this? “Yeah, that’d- that’d be nice,” Ranboo answers, choked-sounding. “That’d be nice.”

“Okay,” Tubbo responds softly. “Then I’ll stay.”

Tubbo does stay until Ranboo falls asleep. And he’s still there when he wakes up, and when Ranboo streams later, Tubbo joins him there, too.

Ranboo doesn’t have any more nightmares that night or the one after.

-

Ranboo’s a fun kid, Wilbur comes to discover.

He wasn’t quite sure what to think about him, when Tommy and Tubbo had started forcefully indoctrinating him into their dynamic with Wilbur, Phil, and Techno. He’d indulged it, because he’s never really been able to deny those two anything they *really* wanted. Plus, Ranboo seemed like a fun kid. Wilbur’d had no objection against getting to know him.

It’d taken a surprisingly short amount of time for Ranboo to start worming his way into Wilbur’s heart, too. He got along with Tommy and Tubbo like a house on fire from the very beginning, but his quiet earnestness and the obviousness with which he cares about Tommy and Tubbo quickly endears him to Wilbur. He’s *funny*, too, master of making bad jokes actually good.

He’s also always ready to make fun of Tubbo or Tommy, which Wilbur fully encourages.

Wilbur’s favorite thing about his newfound relationship with Ranboo, though, might be their little TTS battles. It’s absolutely *hilarious*, having a full-fledged conversation with Ranboo through Phil’s streams. He loves antagonizing Phil, and he gets to talk to Ranboo. It’s a win-win.

In all seriousness, though, his favorite thing is probably just how *easy* it is to talk to Ranboo. He’s so much fun. He always seems to know what sort of quip to make to make Wilbur laugh, and he’s so genuinely interested in everything Wilbur does, too. Wilbur can see how Tommy and Tubbo got so close to him so quickly.

It’s interesting, though, how those three seem to just *get* each other. Wilbur’s never seen a group of people click as easily as they did. It’s amazing, getting to see them as happy as they

are with each other, but Wilbur can't help but think it's a little odd. Especially when they almost seem to know each other better than they know themselves. It makes sense with Tommy and Tubbo; they've known each other for a couple years, at this point. Ranboo, though, they've only known for a couple of months. It doesn't quite make sense.

It doesn't really matter, though, in the long run.

"Ranboo- Ranboo, you prick, give that *back!*"

Wilbur tunes back into the conversation, his lips quirking into a small smile at the sound of Tommy's outraged yell. Ranboo cackles. "I don't think I will, actually," he says cheekily. Tommy yells again.

"That's *my* fuckin' trident, dickhead-"

Ranboo's character, conveniently standing right in front of Wilbur, holds the trident in his hand. "Come and get it, then," Ranboo challenges. He's in full netherite. Wilbur knows for a fact that Tommy has nothing more than the full diamond he's wearing right now.

Tommy snarls. "Just because you're tall in real life, Ran-*boob*, doesn't mean you get to fuckin' hold stuff over my head like you always do in fuckin' *Minecraft*-" Tommy's cut off by another wheezing laugh from Ranboo. Tubbo giggles.

"Are you still salty about him being taller than you, Tommy?" Tubbo asks in amusement.

"*Yes!* He always fuckin' does this!"

Wilbur raises his eyebrows. "How do you know he'd hold stuff over your head?" He questions, stifling a laugh. "Not every tall person would do that, you know."

There's a silence. "Uh," Tommy starts, then cuts himself off. Wilbur raises his eyebrows further. "Well, you do it, so Ranboo probably does it too?" Tommy continues. He sounds very unsure, which just makes Wilbur more curious. He didn't think it was that deep of a question.

More confident, Tommy adds on, "Plus, Ranboo's a prick. He'd *definitely* do something like that."

"Hey!" Ranboo interjects. It sounds like he's aiming to sound offended but his tone is too amused for it to really work. "Don't insult me!"

"I'll insult you all I want, dickhead," Tommy shoots back.

Tubbo pipes in, "Plus, you know it's true, Boo."

"Well, yeah, but he doesn't have to insult me!"

"Insulting you is my favorite pastime, Ranboo! You should know this!"

"Yeah, but that doesn't mean I *like* it!"

“Really, Tommy,” Tubbo breaks in again, sounding mockingly disappointed. “I can’t believe you’d do this. You’re gonna hurt his feelings, you are!”

Tommy lets out a yell of outrage that comes out sounding more like a squawk. “Tubbo, why’re you taking his side on this! You always hated-” Tommy cuts himself off, then picks up what he was saying again, sounding flustered. “Uh, you’d be the one he’d target first with his ridiculous height!”

Wilbur shakes his head, lips turning up into an exasperated smile. These kids, he swears. “How tall even are you, Ranboo?” He asks, cutting off Tubbo’s response.

“Uh, six-foot-six,” Ranboo answers. Wilbur raises his eyebrows.

“Wow, you’re even taller than me. Well done.”

Tommy yells, “Don’t *congratulate* him for that! It sucks!”

Wilbur laughs fondly. “Tommy, just because you’re short doesn’t mean you have to be salty about it.” Wilbur’s smile grows larger at Tommy’s exclamation of anger.

“I’m not fuckin’ *short*, Wilbur- I’m six-foot-three, thank you very much!”

“Tommy, I’ve met you IRL. You are not six-foot-three.”

“Seconded,” Tubbo pipes in to confirm. Tommy’s camera isn’t on in discord, but Wilbur would bet that he’s pouting right about now.

“You all suck,” Tommy says mulishly. Tubbo giggles.

“It’s okay, bossman, we can be short together!” He chirps.

“I am not *fuckin’* short!”

Ranboo breaks in, sounding like he’s struggling not to laugh. “Tommy, there’s no need to overcompensate,” he says in a way that’s no doubt meant to be soothing. “We all love you for who you are.”

Wilbur can’t keep his laughter in at that, breaking into peals of laughter. From the gasping sounds coming from the other end, Wilbur has no doubt Tubbo’s met the same fate. Tommy’s not responding.

A split-second later, a ding sounds, signaling that Tommy’s left the call.

There’s a breath of silence as they all realize, and then they all crack up again.

-

Honestly, ever since the Disk War ended, playing on the SMP has been *fun*.

Sure, there's a few moments that Tommy streams that he'd rather not think about – remembering how Jack absolutely *despised* him, before, is never really a great time. But, when Tommy logs off after the nuke-test stream and is instantly accosted by Jack yelling about how good that stream was and quickly followed up by demanding they hang out soon, well. Tommy can't really stay upset after that.

And Niki's always a sweetheart off-stream, and their relationship had been improving in the *before* up until- well. So Tommy's heartrate does end up getting a little fast, but overall he's fine.

He just allows himself to have *fun* with it. Tubbo and Ranboo kind of do their own things on-stream and on the SMP, but Tommy lets them have their fun – he hangs out with them constantly off-stream, anyway. They don't need to spend *all* their time together, it's not like they're completely co-dependent or anything.

That's a lie.

Anyway.

Working with Sam Nook and building the hotel is just as fun this time around, and when Tommy forces himself to visit the Prison because everyone watching expects him to, he just remembers how Dream had been so tender and *nice* to him before and after the Finale stream. He remembers how Dream, in this life, has said multiple times that he loves Tommy. When Dream's voice drops into that terrifying, manipulative timbre, and Tommy tenses up, he just needs to remember that.

It's fine. It's actually fine, this time. And Dream and him make a habit out of hanging out before and after stream each stream, and- it's good.

Something that *does* make Tommy laugh is how everyone seems to be freaking out about Tubbo and Ranboo spending all their time together on-stream while Tommy's doing his own stuff. They seem to be absolutely *convinced* that Tommy's being left behind. It's hard for Tommy not to laugh when he sees those tweets.

In the past, Tommy might've gotten worried if his two best friends started spending time together without him. Not now.

He knows better, now.

"Twitter thinks we're having a divorce arc," Tommy brings up one time, after stream. Tubbo snorts and Ranboo snickers.

"Sorry, Tommy," Tubbo deadpans. "I'm abandoning you. Ranboo's too perfect."

Tommy sighs, shaking his head. "Guess I always had it coming," he says mournfully.

Ranboo laughs, crowing, "Ah, yes, victory is mine!" At that, all three break into genuine laughter. Tommy wipes at his tears, grinning.

“Seriously, though,” Tubbo says once they’ve got their breathing back under control. “As if we’d let you go that easily.” Tommy’s smile softens into something fond.

“Yeah,” he breathes. Then, a little more teasing, “And as if I’d *let* you two abandon me. You’ll have to try harder than that to get me to let you go.”

Ranboo replies, “Good thing we don’t plan on letting you go, then.” Tommy’s heart squeezes, and he flushes slightly. Tubbo laughs a bit.

“There it is,” he says in amusement. Tommy flips him the bird.

“Shut up, prick.” Ranboo and Tubbo both smile at him, before Ranboo snorts again.

“Just imagine, though- like, *oh, no, Tommy’s third-wheeling his two best friends! How could this happen?*” Ranboo shakes his head. “Like, that’s just ridiculous.”

“We *could* have you act all jealous sometime, though,” Tubbo suggests, sporting a mischievous smile. “It’d be funny seeing everyone’s reactions.”

Tommy laughs. “You are an evil, evil man,” he tells Tubbo. Tubbo only grins in response.

“Thanks, bossman!” Ranboo squints at Tubbo.

“You do- you do realize that that’s not a good thing, right? You have to realize that it’s not a good thing.”

“It’s fun, though,” Tubbo says innocently. Ranboo sighs, burying his face in his hands.

“This really is the man I married, huh,” he says despairingly. Tommy laughs at him, and Tubbo giggles.

“You really did!” Tubbo gasps. “Oh! We should get matching rings again!”

Something in Ranboo’s face shudders before he plasters on his grin again. Tommy narrows his eyes in concern. He opens his mouth to question- whatever that was- when Ranboo says, “Oh, should we?”

“Yeah!” Tubbo beams. He doesn’t seem to have noticed anything at first glance, but when Tommy looks a little closer his eyes are sharper than they were. “Me ‘n Tommy have the compasses, we should have the rings again! It only makes sense!”

Ranboo looks entirely too emotional, closing his eyes and taking in a deep breath. Tubbo’s smile drops off his face, and Tommy’s sure he looks just as worried. “Bossman,” Tubbo starts, voice gone soft and comforting. “You alright?”

Blinking his eyes open, Ranboo brushes off, “Yeah, I’m fine.” He adopts a small smile. “You sure you wanna do that, Tubbo?”

“Course I do!” Tubbo nods his head, face growing determined. “I’ve decided. I’m doing it. You can’t stop me.”

The most worrying thing, to Tommy, is that Ranboo doesn't look convinced. "Alright, Tubbo," he responds indulgently. He glances off-screen for a moment, then adds on, "It's getting kinda late, guys. I should probably go do some homework before I go to bed."

Tommy glances at his own clock. It's only one in the morning their time, so not even dinner time for Ranboo – he's normally up to call for another few hours. This is...this is weird.

"Okay," Tommy agrees hesitantly. "G'night, big man. Love you."

"Love you, Boo," Tubbo adds on. His tone is more subdued than it normally would be. Ranboo gives them a smile. It looks just a little too muted.

"Love you both. Goodnight."

With that, he signs off. Tommy just stares at Ranboo's status as it goes from online to offline the next instant. "That was...weird," he comments slowly. Tubbo's eyebrows are furrowed.

"...Yeah." Tommy bites his lip, running the past few weeks through his head. He can't think of anything, really, that could cause Ranboo to be upset with them. And he was *just* joking around with them. It felt normal. So why-

Tubbo says, voice quiet, "He got all weird when I mentioned the rings." Tommy realizes with a start that Tubbo's shoulders have slumped. He looks sad.

"Tubs-" Tommy starts, before stopping and taking a breath in. "You know that he loves you," Tommy continues, aiming to sound reassuring. Tubbo just hunches further into himself.

"Yeah, but what if he doesn't wanna be married anymore?" Tubbo asks miserably. Tommy's heart clenches, and he shakes his head.

He says, "Well that'd be stupid, then." Tommy lets his tone soften, and adds on, "Tubbo, Ranboo loves you. I know for a fact that he adored being married to you. I'm sure it's nothing about you."

Tubbo's silent for a moment. "...I hope so," he whispers. He bows his head, rubbing around one of his fingers. "I don't think I could..." Tubbo trails off. "He's the one that wanted it in the first place. I couldn't-"

"Tubbo," Tommy cuts off, not harshly. "You're getting into your own head. Calm down, alright?" Tubbo takes in a deep breath, letting it out slowly.

"You're right." When Tubbo looks up again, he's not smiling, but he looks a little calmer. Tommy's heart swells with pride anyway. "Thanks, Toms," Tubbo whispers. Tommy rolls his eyes.

"What have I said about you thanking me for shit like this?" Tommy asks teasingly. Gratifyingly, Tubbo lets out a wet giggle.

"Yeah, yeah, my bad." Tubbo goes quiet for a second, and then he says, "Let's keep an eye on Ranboo for a little while, alright?"

“Course,” Tommy agrees easily. “Was planning on doing that anyway.” Tommy narrows his eyes playfully at Tubbo. “He’s *my* best friend, after all.”

Predictably, Tubbo rears up in offense. “Fuck off! He’s *my* husband!”

“Ah, here comes the possessiveness streak.” Tommy shakes his head, trying to stifle his snickers. “That’s rather toxic of you, Tubbo, innit?”

Tubbo lets out a genuine laugh, throwing a- sock?- at the screen, and responds, “Fuck *off*, Tommy.” Tommy giggles.

“There’s that smile,” he says. Tubbo cuts off his laugh, his smile fading into something painfully soft.

“...You cheesy dickhead,” Tubbo says fondly. Tommy just sends him a crooked grin. Tubbo yawns soon after, and Tommy can’t help but follow.

“Prick,” he mutters, sleepiness all of a sudden weighing down on his shoulders. “Makin’ me yawn.”

Tubbo rolls his eyes. “Sorry-not-sorry,” he says lightly. He glances off-screen for a second. “We should probably sleep, Toms,” he murmurs. Tommy nods reluctantly.

“Yeah, we should.” Tommy pauses. “...Ranboo’ll be alright,” he reassures. He’s not sure whether it’s more for himself or Tubbo. Tubbo closes his eyes for a moment, but then nods.

“Yeah, he will be.” Tubbo yawns again. “Alright, I’m going to sleep. Night, Toms. Love you.”

“Love you, too. Night, Tubs.” With that, Tommy leans back in his seat, weariness setting into his shoulders.

Before he goes to sleep, he sends Ranboo a message. He wouldn’t normally do this, but...he feels like Ranboo could use some more reassurance.

Tommy: *hey, big man, good luck with your hw. love you <3*

It only takes a few moments for Ranboo to respond.

Ranboo: *love you too, toms :)*

His heart’s set at ease.

Still, it’s not easy for Tommy to fall asleep.

-

Ranboo’s acting weird, is Tubbo’s conclusion.

At first, he was worried it was because of him. He...didn't want that, of course, but he was ready to accept that maybe he'd been too presumptuous in assuming that Ranboo would want to be unofficially married again. It hurt. Of course it did. But Tubbo would accept it.

But, it's not just that. The further into February they get, the more withdrawn Ranboo seems to get. He's talking to them less- he's still hanging out with Tubbo on-stream, but he's far less likely to hang out for hours on call afterwards like they used to.

Tommy suggests that Ranboo's just getting overwhelmed with homework – it's his senior year, after all. That takes a lot of work. Tubbo doubts that, personally, but...he doesn't know what else could be wrong. Ranboo's always been reliable – he's insecure, Tubbo knows that, but he's never *once* left Tubbo. Tubbo won't believe that Ranboo would abandon them that easily.

Slowly, Tubbo manages to convince himself that Ranboo's alright. That they're alright, even if they're not talking as much. it- it hurts, but Tubbo's sure it's fine. It's fine.

It has to be.

-

A sick sense of deja-vu hits Tommy like a train when Dream, one day in call, mentions off-handedly that it'd be neat if Tommy's character got trapped in the prison.

"It'd add a new level of fucked-up to our relationship, y'know," Dream says conversationally. Tommy's thankful his camera's off. He's not sure he could hide the shocked dread that's like ice in his veins from showing on his face.

Tommy laughs haltingly. "It sure would," he responds, once it's clear that Dream's waiting for an answer. Dream hums consideringly.

"You know you don't have to do this," Dream says awkwardly. "Just 'cause I think it's cool doesn't mean that you do. It can't be fun being verbally abused for a whole stream."

Biting his lip, Tommy gives himself a moment to think. He- honestly, at this point, he knows he doesn't need to do it. He knows that Dream wouldn't judge him, and that if he needed to, he could go to Phil or Wilbur, or even Techno, and get them to support him in his decision. But...

Tommy never really got the closure that he craved in his past life. This visit was supposed to be that closure, but maybe...maybe him acting this out again, pounding into him that he's *not* there anymore, and that Dream can't hurt him anymore...it might be nice. This might be an awful idea, and he knows that Ranboo and Tubbo would likely berate him heavily for this, but-

He wants to do it. If only so that his nightmares finally, finally fade into not being real again.

"I'll do it, Dream," Tommy finally answers. Dream lets out a little, excited laugh, and Tommy gains a slight grin of his own. "Plus," Tommy adds, "This'll give us a *lot* of

opportunities to fuck with the viewers.”

Dream wheezes. “Oh, I knew there was a reason we were friends,” Dream says in amusement. Tommy’s grin cracks a little wider.

“Let’s plan this bitch out, then,” Tommy says.

In the end, the stream where Tommy gets trapped *is* a little hard to act out. But, in the end, Tommy’s still in his own home. Dream goes back to his laughing, dorky self almost immediately, and when Tommy hangs up, Ranboo and Tubbo are there, bugging him into joining a call. Ranboo’s back to his normal self, for once. Tubbo teases him like normal; they both subtly check to make sure Tommy’s alright.

Tommy doesn’t have to be afraid anymore.

(“Y’know,” Tommy had commented while they were on call after the stream, “How’re we explaining the TNT on top of the prison?” They never really found out who did that in Tommy’s past life. He’s always been curious. It did kinda cause Tommy’s death, after all.

Dream shrugged. “We’ll figure it out later,” he brushed off. “It won’t be relevant for a while, anyway.”

“True,” Tommy laughed.

And that was that.)

-

“Will Twitter *stop* assuming that we’re growing apart because we don’t hang out as much on stream?”

Tubbo’s frustrated groan is just met by Tommy’s laugh. Ranboo sits back in his seat, snickering a bit. “We’re just too good together,” Ranboo teases. Tubbo sighs dramatically, falling back in his seat.

“Yeah, but he’s my *best friend*,” Tubbo whines. “They need to get out of our fucking business and accept that I can have more than one best friend!” And- oh. Tubbo actually sounds annoyed.

Ranboo sinks back a little bit, guilt welling up in his gut. “We can chill a bit on-stream?” He offers tentatively. Tubbo shoots him a glare.

“Don’t be stupid, Ranboo. They just need to butt the hell out,” Tubbo states firmly. The guilt eases the slightest amount, but still, he can’t help but feel bad. Twitter’s dumb, but it is true that Tommy and Tubbo haven’t been able to hang out as much, recently.

“Yeah,” Tommy says, cutting off Ranboo’s thoughts. “Twitter’s dumb. I know you two are my best friends- and that you aren’t getting rid of me,” Tommy adds on teasingly. He looks comfortable and like he’s not lying at all, but Ranboo can’t help but think- *but what if he’s lying?*

Tommy's face grows more serious. "Ranboo, really, I'm fine," he says more gently. "Really."

Ranboo breathes out slightly. "Okay," he whispers. Tommy and Tubbo start an entirely new conversation fairly quickly, and Ranboo sinks into the background. He chimes in occasionally. They both seem happy whenever he does.

Still, though, the guilt doesn't end up fading away completely in the end.

-

"Tommy- holy shit, dude, that was *great*."

Tommy breathes out slightly, letting the tension seep out of his shoulders. "Really?" He asks, then winces. It's a little more tentative than he wanted.

"Yeah, of *course*, really!" Dream exclaims. "Dude, you knocked that out of the fucking *park*! When you were taunting me and reacting to all my fucked up stuff I was already impressed, and when you acted out your death I *actually* got chills. Like- *jesus*, Tommy."

A small grin forms on Tommy's face. Dream- *before* Dream- never once sounded this enthusiastic while praising Tommy. It sets Tommy more at ease. "...Thanks, Dream."

"Course, dude!" Tommy can't see Dream – he still hasn't ever seen Dream's face – but he'd like to imagine that he's grinning. "Now- I gotta run, I've got another lore meeting soon, but you did *so* great, Tommy."

And at this, Tommy laughs a bit. "Laying it on a bit thick there, big man," Tommy says teasingly. His voice slips into something more sincere, and he adds on, "Thanks, man. I'll see you later."

"See you!"

With that, Tommy exits the call with Dream. Before joining the group call as his best friends no-doubt want him to, he just relaxes back into his chair. Sighing, he leans his head back and stares at the ceiling.

Ender, it's always weird acting with Dream – and with Wilbur, too, earlier on. Their characters are so *different* from how they are in real life. Though little snippets of their actual personalities pop out sometimes, Wilbur's always a little too cruel and Dream a little too apathetic. He's not gonna lie, it does help, them being different. Helps Tommy distance himself.

It also helps that the more time that passes, the more Tommy has to play a part of his own.

This Tommy's still a part of him. Tommy doesn't think he ever won't be. But...it's nice, that Tommy doesn't feel the fear, once so intrinsic to him, as much anymore. Ranboo would call that growth. Tommy likes it.

Once upon a time, just the thought of the Prison made Tommy's hands shake. Now, it's been replaced with memories of planning out stuff with Dream, laughing before and afterwards

with Tubbo, reassurances from Ranboo. Teasing and praise from Wilbur, and Phil and Techno, too. It'll always be a dark spot in Tommy's memories, but it's fading away.

Tommy can't help but be relieved.

-

"Hey, Ranboo!"

Ranboo sinks back into his chair. "Hi, Dream," he greets, a small smile appearing on his face. As much as Ranboo can't enjoy doing lore much, now, Dream's excitement is contagious.

"What'd you wanna talk about?"

"I just wanted to hang out," Dream explains. "We haven't really gotten to talk much about stuff other than lore, y'know?"

Ranboo relaxes slightly. "Oh," he says. A pleased flush appears on his cheeks, and he's as glad as ever that he's faceless. "Well then, hi, Dream."

Dream laughs, a little amused. "Hi," he responds. Ranboo laughs a bit, too. The conversation's awkward at first; stilted, but eventually it flows into something a little more natural.

He can understand why Tommy loves talking to Dream so much, now. Dream's fun to talk to, and he responds to Ranboo's honestly terrible puns with the same wheezing laugh every time, making Ranboo's heart warm pleasantly.

Ranboo's always a little nervous, honestly, whenever he has to talk to Dream – his voice is far too similar to the Dream from *before*, and unlike Tommy, Ranboo hasn't talked to Dream enough to distance himself. This is helping, though. Dream's a lot kinder in this reality than the last.

That's a commonality for pretty much everyone, Ranboo's found.

At some point, the conversation ebbs. It's not uncomfortable, though; Dream's editing something, and Ranboo's doing some research for a paper he has to write for school. And Ranboo is *really* looking forward to being done with these stupid papers. He'd much rather be playing Minecraft, thank you very much.

"Oh!" Dream exclaims, jerking Ranboo from his concentrated state. "Ranboo- I know we said this wasn't going to be about lore, but I just had the *best* idea."

Ranboo raises his eyebrows. "Yeah?" He prompts.

"What if- hear me out, what if *your* character was the one to blow up the TNT on top of the Prison? Y'know, to trap Tommy in there."

The blood freezes in Ranboo's veins.

Dream continues on, ignorant to the sheer *shock* flooding through Ranboo's system at the moment. "Listen- it'd make sense! Your character's always been kinda helping mine out from the shadows; with the disk and Community House. This would just add to it, and we could build on it later!"

And Ranboo-

Ranboo can't-

"Sorry- Dream, sorry- I've gotta-" Ranboo sucks in a quick, shallow breath, which is *nowhere* near enough to fill his suddenly-burning lungs, and forces out, "I've gotta go, Dream."

He leaves the call before Dream can respond. And in an instant, he's left the Dream SMP server entirely.

Quickly clicking over to his DMs with Tubbo, Ranboo just...stares at them, for a moment. He- he-

He did this. He's the one that blew up the TNT on top of the Community House- he'd hoped – ender, he'd hoped *so* bad that since no one had mentioned his involvement in the TNT, that it *wasn't* him. Looks like that's too good to be true.

Ender, how could he be so *stupid*?

He's not safe to be around. He never was; he never will be. Before, he caused Tommy to die. Before, he caused the grief that had Tubbo utterly destroyed for *ages*. Before, he caused the nightmares that Tommy still suffers through today. And even this life, he's not blameless. Tommy and Tubbo- they deserve to be happy together. They don't deserve to have a blight on their existence, like Ranboo is.

Ranboo stares for a little while longer at Tubbo's DMs. The last message sits tauntingly in front of him.

Tubbo: *sleep well, boo! i love you! :D*

His heart cracks in his chest. But- Ranboo squeezes his eyes shut for a brief second, then doesn't allow himself to think about it before he blocks him. His heart breaks a little bit more as he blocks Tommy, too.

Dream's blowing up his DMs. He blocks him as well, before blocking the rest of SBI, for good measure. His eyes are burning.

He shuts down his PC, his tears blurring his vision. He swipes impatiently at them. Then, collapsing on his bed, he curls up on his side. He'll miss Tubbo's bright smile, and Tommy's never-ending excitement, and Wilbur's reassurance and Phil's patience and Techno's humor. Ender, he misses them already. But-

He- he has to do this. He has to. Ranboo needs to keep them safe, and if this is the way to do it...

He'll do it.

Chapter End Notes

comment if you hate my guts! thanks for reading, cya wednesday <3



(meme courtesy of [whirly the beloved](#), to whom i told 15 seconds of context and she came up with this gem)

always gold

Chapter Summary

Dream starts rambling, sounding more scared by the second, “I just mentioned that it might be neat if his character was the one to blow up the TNT on top of the Prison! I didn’t-”

Tommy doesn’t hear the rest of Dream’s statement. His gaze flashes over to Tubbo still on the phone- the cast of his face is worried. Tommy can barely catch sight his own face in the top corner- it’s gone pale white. Eyes wide. He looks scared.

He *feels* scared.

Tommy cuts off whatever Dream was rambling about. “Dream, sorry, I’m- I’m gonna need to call you back.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy’s facetimeing Tubbo when Dream calls him.

Wrinkling his brows, Tommy looks from Tubbo’s image to his screen. “Dream’s calling me,” he says slowly. Tubbo raises his eyebrows.

“Does he normally call out of the blue like that?” He asks. Tommy shakes his head.

“Not really.” Tommy debates with himself for a second, then states, “I’m gonna go ahead and pick up. I’ll mute for a sec.”

“Alright.” Tommy picks up in the same instant that he mutes; Tubbo does the same on his end.

“Hey, Dream,” Tommy greets.

Instantly, how frantic Dream sounds makes Tommy’s back go ramrod-straight. “Tommy,” Dream says, voice high. “Tommy, can you reach Ranboo right now?”

“What happened with Ranboo?” Tommy asks immediately. He navigates to their DMs instantly, though, and types out a message. Tommy follows up with, “Is he alright?”

Fear clenches in Tommy’s heart as Dream lets out a frustrated moan. “I don’t *know*,” he says, sounding distressed. Tommy immediately sends a message – *hey man you alright???*

It doesn't send. Tommy's blood freezes in his veins. That's the message- that's the message he gets when he's been blocked. Tubbo's done it playfully a couple times, but-

"What the *fuck* happened?!" Tommy asks, voice low and forcefully calm.

"We were just hanging out!" Dream explains. "I- I mentioned something I thought might be cool in lore, and- and he freaked out! I don't- I don't know-"

"What the hell did you say?!" Tommy demands, more impatient, more frantic. He spams about five more messages. None of them send.

Dream starts rambling, sounding more scared by the second, "I just mentioned that it might be neat if his character was the one to blow up the TNT on top of the Prison! I didn't-"

Tommy doesn't hear the rest of Dream's statement. His gaze flashes over to Tubbo still on the phone- the cast of his face is worried. Tommy can barely catch sight his own face in the top corner- it's gone pale white. Eyes wide. He looks scared.

He *feels* scared.

Tommy cuts off whatever Dream was rambling about. "Dream, sorry, I'm- I'm gonna need to call you back."

Only having the energy to feel a *little* bit bad, Tommy hangs up and hurriedly unmutes on his phone. "Tubbo- Tubbo check if you can DM Ranboo."

"Tommy, what-" Tubbo starts, voice high. Tommy cuts him off.

"Just do it!" He demands.

"Okay, okay!" Tommy can only wait, curling his free hand into a fist. He digs his fingernails into his palm. "Tommy," Tubbo's voice returns, painfully calm. Forcefully calm. "Tommy, why can I not send anything?"

Tommy groans, burying his head in his hands. "*Fuck*- okay. Okay." Tommy takes a deep breath in. Lets it out. "Dream- Dream and Ran were in call," Tommy starts, voice shaky. "They- they started talking about the SMP, I guess, and..."

"And?" Tubbo prompts after Tommy trails off. Tommy shakes his head slightly and forces himself to continue at the sound of the rising panic in Tubbo's voice.

"Sorry- he mentioned something about Ranboo being the one to blow up the TNT on top of the prison."

Tubbo's face goes white. "...*Fuck*," he whispers.

"Yeah."

"Ranboo- Ranboo wouldn't *blame* himself for that, would he?"

Tommy bites his lip hard enough to bleed. "He- I hope not," Tommy starts. "But...I wouldn't be surprised if he does." He lets out a humorless laugh. "He's always been awful about blaming himself."

Tubbo's face drops even further. He buries his own head in his hands. "...Yeah," Tubbo mutters. "Yeah, he really fucking has, hasn't he."

"Fuck," Tommy swears once again. "This was *so long ago!* And- it wouldn't have even been his fault, even if he *did* do it!"

Eyes teary, Tubbo levels a look at Tommy. "You have to know that wouldn't matter to him," he tells Tommy. Tommy groans.

"Yeah, I know." Tommy squeezes his eyes shut for a moment, before reopening them. "We have to do something," he whispers. Tubbo rolls his eyes.

"Duh." Tubbo furrows his brows for a moment, clearly thinking. "We'll give him a little bit of time," Tubbo says slowly. "Hopefully he'll- he'll get his head out of his ass and realize how little we care about shit like this."

"And if he doesn't," Tommy picks up, "Then we'll go find him."

Tubbo flashes him a trembling grin. "Hell yeah, we will." Tommy eyes him for a moment.

"I'll come over tonight," he says softly. Tubbo closes his eyes, and nods briefly.

"Please," he whispers. "Please."

"I will," Tommy promises.

Tubbo needs it, and if Tommy's being honest, he really needs it too.

-

It's when Tommy arrives that Tubbo finally lets himself break down.

"Hey," Tommy murmurs, his voice meaning comfort, like always. He opens his arms, and murmurs, "Hey, c'mere."

Tubbo burrows into Tommy's chest, burying his sobs in Tommy's shirt. Tommy wraps his arms securely around Tubbo's back, bringing one hand up to his neck and playing with his hair. The soothing motions help less than they normally would. Tommy rests his head atop Tubbo's, and Tubbo doesn't acknowledge the tears soaking into his hair.

They stay there for longer than is probably healthy. Finally, Tubbo leans back. He grabs Tommy's hand. "C'mon," he says dully, tugging Tommy forward. "Let's go to my room."

Tubbo just climbs into his bed once they get to his room. The only thing Tommy does is drop his bag, before he joins Tubbo. He makes himself comfortable under the covers, and Tubbo,

once Tommy's done shifting around, throws an arm over Tommy's waist and pillows his head on Tommy's chest. And they just...lay there.

Tommy sighs, after a while, and presses a kiss to Tubbo's hair. Tubbo almost starts crying again. Tommy's always been affectionate, but the kisses weren't really a thing they used to do until Ranboo came along.

So much of who Tubbo is – who they *both* are – is because of Ranboo. Tubbo can't imagine living without him.

"He'll come back," Tommy whispers. Tubbo nods into his chest.

"He'd fucking better," Tubbo mutters back. "He's not allowed to leave or I'll kick his kneecaps out."

Tommy laughs slightly, pulling Tubbo a little closer. Tubbo goes. Tubbo always goes. "Sounding a little counterproductive there, Tubs," he says in amusement. Tubbo shakes his head.

"Don't care," he mumbles. "Just want him back." And- it's not that Tubbo doesn't have faith in Ranboo. He does, it's just...

He's so attached to Ranboo that even the thought of being away from him physically *aches*. And- there's not much he can do about it when they live a fucking ocean away from each other. Ranboo blocked them on literally every form of communication they have. Tubbo misses him- he misses him *so much* already, and it's not even been a day.

"How're we gonna get to him if he doesn't reach back out?" Tommy asks, seeming to have followed Tubbo's thought process. "It's not like it's an easy trip out there."

Tubbo closes his eyes. "We'll figure it out," he murmurs. He snuggles just a little bit closer into Tommy's chest. He repeats, "We'll figure it out."

Tommy huffs out a bit of a laugh. "Yeah, we will," he whispers.

-

They decide to fly over to America.

Ranboo doesn't answer any of their messages- and, from the rising panic from *everyone* in the Dream SMP server and from Ranboo's other friends, he's not answering any of them, either. Every worried message sends a spike of pain through Tommy's heart, and he can't stop himself from glancing at his own barren DMs and *ache*.

Tommy's just grateful that they'd shared their addresses before. Ranboo had laughed when they'd demanded it, saying that they won't be able to visit for ages, but Tommy and Tubbo had both been persistent. It was originally to send gifts, which they'd both taken advantage of over Christmas, but now it has *much* more importance.

They give Ranboo three days. In the meantime, they pack. They convince their parents to let them go- thankfully, after seeing how frantic they are and knowing how much they love Ranboo, they decide to let them go. One of the days, Tubbo receives a package. Tommy doesn't see what it is, but when Tubbo opens it, his eyes light up. He packs it away quickly. Tommy doesn't press – he'll probably find out later, anyway.

Tommy streams one last time, acting out his resurrection and not answering – not being *able* to answer – any of Dream's questions before or after the stream. Tubbo does his own little stream. Neither of their hearts are really in it.

("You built me a memorial?" Tommy asks quietly. Tubbo eyes him, his eyes going soft.

"Yeah," he says. "I did."

Emotion knots in Tommy's throat. Silently, he draws Tubbo into a hug. Tubbo hugs him back.

They just hold each other for a while.)

Fuck, Tommy misses Ranboo. It's only been a few days, but- they haven't gone a day without speaking since they found each other again. Ranboo's always the one Tommy can go to for support, for comfort, for relief. He always makes Tommy's day better. Where Tubbo makes Tommy laugh, Ranboo makes Tommy smile. It's like half of Tommy's soul is missing- and fuck, he *misses* him.

The day comes. The flight over takes entirely too long. Tommy's phone is practically overflowing with missed messages, but all he does is shoot a quick message to his parents, telling them that he landed, before he shuts his phone off.

"We know how to get there?" Tommy confirms. Tubbo nods, squinting down at his phone.

"Yup. It's actually pretty convenient from here."

"Alright." Tommy bites his lip, eyes catching on something. "One sec, Tubbo," he states, before he stalks away.

It only takes a few minutes before he comes back. Tubbo's eyes catch on what Tommy's holding before Tommy can pack it away. His eyes go soft. He doesn't comment on it, though, and just says, "Let's go." Tommy nods, and grabs Tubbo's hand.

"Let's go save our dumbass best friend from himself."

"That's my *husband* to you, actually."

"Oh, shut the fuck up."

-

It's been three days since Ranboo cut himself off from everyone that he hears a knock on the door.

His awareness at first is bleary at best. He blinks slowly one, two, three times, dragging himself from the haze he's fallen into. His parents left on a business trip a little under a week ago; they won't be back for another three. *Great timing*, Ranboo can't help but think as he forces himself out of bed.

He's never felt this lonely.

He- he didn't realize how hard it would be. He knew he'd miss everyone – knew he'd miss his *best friends* – but it's like a knife is stabbing him through the heart whenever he thinks about them. He had to force himself to block everyone on *everything*. He doesn't stream, either; he's glad, at least, that he got to do the stream he planned with Sam before everything went south.

Ender. Everyone must be so pissed at him.

He doesn't even want to *imagine* what Tubbo and Tommy must be feeling right about now.

Shaking his head, Ranboo rises to his feet and trudges slowly towards the door. He can't think about them right now. He's forced himself not to cry- he can't cry, not when all of this is his fault. *He's* the one that hurt them. He doesn't get to act like he's the victim instead.

It feels like it takes forever to reach the door. Finally, he manages, and unlocks it. The knocking hasn't stopped. "Hello?" He calls tiredly as he pulls it open. "I'm sorry, my parents aren't-"

His voice cuts off. A choked sound replaces it. Because-

Tubbo and Tommy- Tommy and Tubbo- they're both *here*. They're both-

Ranboo lets out another hitched gasp, tears already burning at the backs of his eyes. He blinks once, twice, three times, and pinches himself just to be sure he's not dreaming. He's not.

They're really here.

"What-" Ranboo cuts himself off, scrubbing at his eyes with his forearm. "What are you- what are you guys *doing* here?!"

Neither of them answer. Instead, Tubbo finally unfreezes and lets out a wail. He barrels into Ranboo's chest, and though this hasn't happened in- *ender*; in *eighty-plus years*, Ranboo instinctively catches him, wrapping his arms securely around his back. Tommy snuffles, rubbing at his own eyes before he takes a step closer.

"You're an absolute *prick*," Tommy informs him, voice wobbly, before he molds against Ranboo as well. Ranboo, scrunching his own eyes shut, readjusts and pulls one of his arms free, wrapping it around Tommy's shoulders.

They're both- they're both so *warm*. Tubbo's crying into Ranboo's chest, and Tommy's soaking Ranboo's shoulder, and there's a pile of bags left forgotten behind them, and- they're *here*. They came to see him- they *came* to *him* because he cut them off? Is this real?

“Yes, dickhead, it’s real,” Tommy cuts off Ranboo’s thoughts, and Ranboo realizes with a start that he must have vocalized at least some of that. Ranboo chokes out a laugh, and indulges himself for a moment, pulling them both closer.

“You- you came,” he says in awe. Tubbo leans back from the hug and glares at him. Tommy follows suit, bringing an arm up to rub at his eyes again.

Tubbo whispers harshly, voice still wet with tears, “Yeah, of course we did, you bastard- and what the hell was that, *blocking* us?!”

“I-” Ranboo backs up a bit, arms coming around his chest protectively. “I had to,” he whispers brokenly. His eyes flick to Tommy.

“No the fuck you *didn’t*,” Tommy hisses, eyes wide and red. “Ranboo- you scared the *shit* out of us, man!”

“I *had* to!” Ranboo exclaims again. “I- I caused so *much*. I- the Community House, and the disk, and-”

Ranboo’s voice breaks, and he hunches over in an attempt to hide his tears. He scrubs at his eyes, and shifts to look towards Tommy. “I did the TNT, too,” he admits, small. “I- I hurt you both so much, and was tearing you two apart from each other and- and I couldn’t-”

Tommy and Tubbo both have lost their angry stances. They look horrified. Ranboo can’t bring himself to look at them, averting his eyes as he whispers, voice shaking violently, “You aren’t safe around me.”

Silence, heavy and uncomfortable, falls between them. Ranboo hunches in, more and more, closing his eyes. Now they’ll leave, he convinces himself. Now they’ll realize that they’re better without him, and that they’ll be happy, and that-

A small, warm body presses itself close to Ranboo. Ranboo’s eyes jerk open as small arms wrap around his torso. He looks down, and- “T- Tubbo?” he asks, trembling.

Tubbo just...hugs him, for a moment. Ranboo, hesitantly, wraps his arms back around Tubbo. “You’re an idiot,” Tubbo whispers into Ranboo’s chest. His grip tightens almost painfully, and he states, “We don’t *care*, Ranboo.”

Ranboo, lost, so, so lost, glances up to meet Tommy’s eyes. He’s still crying a bit, but he nods towards Tubbo and says, “What- what he said, big man. We don’t give a shit.”

Scrubbing violently at his eyes with one arm, Ranboo starts, “Guys, I-” He cuts himself off, voice breaking. Ender, his heart *hurts*. They came all this way, just for *him*, and he- he doesn’t *understand*. He repeats, “I hurt you so *much*, how can you-”

“We don’t *care*,” Tubbo insists earnestly, leaning back slightly from the hug and meeting Ranboo’s eyes. There’s a familiar fierceness shining in his eyes, telling him, *I’m not giving up on you*. It’s *exactly* like Tubbo always said while they were married. Ranboo turns his head away, letting out another broken sob.

“You *should* care,” he argues. His voice cracks once again. He forces out, “You *should*-”

Tubbo pulls away, and Ranboo’s heart sinks. Despite what he said, he- *ender*, he *missed* them. But, no, this is what he wants. This is what’s best for them, this is what’ll protect them. He distanced himself for a reason, he left for a reason. It only makes sense that they’d-

A small, unfamiliar yet unmistakable hand slips into his own. Ranboo clasps it back without thinking about it, and his breath catches at the feel of something small and metal trapped in between. Ranboo looks at Tubbo questioningly, and Tubbo just gives him a small smile and squeezes his hand before pulling his own hand away. “Look,” he encourages, and Ranboo looks down.

He unfurls his fingers, one by one, and-

He instantly chokes on a sob, and can’t stop himself from dropping to his knees, utterly overcome. Tubbo follows, kneeling down in front of him and giving him an overwhelmingly soft, overwhelmingly *loving* smile. Tommy joins them as well, kneeling next to the two, and when Ranboo glances over Tommy looks just as soft.

Ranboo stares down at the ring in his hand, tears blurring his vision. Tubbo smile widens into an entirely too affectionate grin through his own tears. “I promised you I’d get these made, didn’t I?” He asks. He plucks the ring from Ranboo’s slack hand and tenderly, so tenderly, slides it onto his ring finger. Ranboo bows his head, his emotion too much to speak through for a moment.

“But-” He eventually chokes out. Tubbo gently shushes him.

“No buts,” Tubbo shakes his head. Finishing adjusting the ring so it’s resting exactly as Ranboo always had it before, Tubbo clasps both Ranboo’s hands in his own and presses their foreheads together. Their eyes are still locked. “For forever,” he whispers, and Ranboo chokes on yet another sob. “Remember?”

Ranboo closes his eyes, pressing his forehead harder against Tubbo’s. Last time, it was Ranboo saying that to Tubbo; a promise that they could have a future. Figures Tubbo would turn it back on him like this. “I remember,” he whispers. The cold, lonely, guilty vice around his heart is lessening slightly, but-

He shifts his eyes towards Tommy, a knot forming in his throat again. “You *died* because of me,” Ranboo breathes brokenly. Tommy shakes his head, scoffing lightly.

“*Dream* killed me, Ranboob, not you. Don’t take the blame for something you had no control over.” Despite himself, Ranboo can’t help but giggle at the nickname. Tommy softens, then, and before Ranboo can react he’s tucking something behind Ranboo’s ear.

Ranboo blinks, sniffing. He reaches up to brush his fingers against- whatever Tommy’s put in his hair, and tugs it out when that yields no answers. And-

“Oh,” Ranboo chokes out, staring at the allium in his hand. Tommy chuckles, and when Ranboo looks up at him through his tears Tommy just looks so, so affectionate.

“Yeah, *oh*, ” Tommy echoes, slight grin on his face. He gently tugs the allium from Ranboo’s lax fingers and tucks it back behind his ear, before clasping Ranboo’s free hand in his own. “We love you, Ranboo,” Tommy says, so entirely soft. Tubbo nods out of the corner of Ranboo’s eyes.

He quietly repeats, “We don’t blame you for *anything*. ” Ranboo must still look unconvinced, because Tubbo sighs and adds on, “Ranboo, who was the one who helped me build my bee sanctuary? Who was the one who built Snowchester with me and kept me sane during when Tommy was-” Tubbo swallows heavily- “Was in the prison? Who’s helped the both of us through our nightmares more times than I can count?”

Tommy interjects, “And who visited me in Exile when no-one else would? And always defended me? Who’s *always* been kind to me, no matter what?”

Ranboo bows his head, tears beading up again. He doesn’t answer. Tubbo breathes out, and presses his forehead against Ranboo’s. “And,” Tubbo continues, voice barely above a whisper, “Who kept me alive after Tommy died?”

Tommy inhales sharply. Ranboo winces, and his heart squeezes. “...I still wasn’t enough,” he breathes.

He glances up to see Tubbo close his eyes, pained. He brings a hand up and runs it through Ranboo’s hair, murmuring, “You did all you could. It wasn’t your fault.” Tubbo glances over, and when Ranboo does, too, Tommy looks absolutely devastated. Tubbo reaches over with his free hand and grasps onto Tommy’s. “You’re the reason I was alive for as long as I was,” Tubbo admits softly.

Ranboo’s breath hitches. He goes to bow his head, but Tubbo taps his chin, keeping him looking up.

“My point, Boo,” Tubbo says, “Is that you’re so much more than what your Enderwalk-self might’ve done. I don’t care. Tommy doesn’t care. It’s *not your fault*. ”

“We love you, Ran,” Tommy adds in softly. “And we always will.”

And then- and this is the thing that makes Ranboo *sob*- Tommy and Tubbo both lean in and press firm kisses to either side of Ranboo’s forehead.

One of them wipes at the tears streaming down Ranboo’s cheeks. Ranboo leans into the gentle touch as Tommy repeats, “We don’t blame you.”

And- for the first time, Ranboo- Ranboo believes them.

Ranboo wraps his arms around the both of them, tugging them close and burying his face in their shoulders. “You both are absolutely crazy,” he mutters into their shoulders. Both of them stifle laughs, and Ranboo can’t stop himself from joining them. They’re more like sobs than laughs, honestly, but Ranboo can’t bring himself to care.

“I love you guys,” he whispers, pulling them both closer, “So, so much.”

Tubbo's grin curves against his shoulder; Tommy's breathy laugh brushes against his cheekbone. "Love you too," they both chirp at the same time. Tubbo adds on, "If you ever scare us like that again, though, I will steal your kneecaps and bury them in the yard."

The matter-of-fact way Tubbo says that just makes Ranboo crack up. "I don't plan on it," Ranboo promises breathily. "I promise."

It's the last thing Ranboo plans on doing.

They just...stay there, on the floor in front of Ranboo's front door, for what feels like hours. Eventually, they move to Ranboo's room. Neither of them let go of Ranboo; he doesn't complain, simply taking them along with him as they all get ready for bed.

And when Ranboo falls asleep, his two best friends are beside him.

-

Ranboo wakes up slowly.

At first, he doesn't quite realize why he feels so- so at *peace*. His muscles are more relaxed than they've ever been, and he's warm; so, *so* warm. He blinks lethargically, becoming aware of a weight at his sides. Something's pressing down on his chest, something else digging into his ribs; something cold pressed against his calf. He glances down, and- oh.

Now he remembers.

A small, awe-filled smile crosses over Ranboo's face. He carefully brings a hand up to brush through Tubbo's hair, his head pillowed on Ranboo's chest. Tommy's splayed half on top of Ranboo, one arm thrown carelessly across his stomach and hand tangled in Tubbo's sweatshirt. One of them is digging their honestly-freezing feet into Ranboo's calf. It's the last thing Ranboo cares about, at the moment.

Last night really wasn't a dream, after all. Ranboo relaxes his head back into the pillows, closing his eyes again. Tommy mumbles something and buries his head deeper into the crook of Ranboo's neck, and Ranboo chuckles a bit and accommodates for him. Tubbo mutters something, a breathy complaint of, "Shut 'p, 't's too ear'y," and Ranboo can't help but laugh a little more.

"Sorry, Bee," he murmurs. He presses a kiss to the crown of Tubbo's head. "Go back to sleep."

Tubbo turns his head further into Ranboo's chest, and his breathing evens back out seconds later. Ranboo can't help but smile widely. Ender, his heart feels more full than it ever has. He closes his eyes again, tightening his grip ever so slightly around his best friends, and falls back asleep easily.

The second time Ranboo wakes up, he's alone. He only gets a split-second to start worrying, though, because he becomes increasingly aware of the sensation of *something* against his right hand. He sleepily grabs for it, and brings it up towards his face.

making breakfast! don't sleep too late sleepyhead :P – tommy

Ranboo lets out a disbelieving laugh. He presses his hands against his face, his smile almost too wide to bear. Ender, he loves him. Loves them.

Slowly, he makes his way out of bed. He doesn't bother to change, just stumbling slowly down the stairs towards the kitchen. Sure enough, there's the smell of *something* delicious coming from it. Faint humming becomes audible, and Ranboo pauses for a moment just to listen.

It sounds like Tommy, humming along to one of Wilbur's new songs. Ranboo can't stop a horribly fond smile from crossing across his lips, and he picks the rest of the way towards the kitchen quickly enough. Tommy's back is to him. He's making pancakes, it looks like, with bacon frying in another pan as Tommy waits for the pancakes to be ready to flip.

Quietly, Ranboo makes his way over. He wraps his arms around Tommy's waist from behind. Tommy startles the slightest bit, but Ranboo just pulls him close and lays his cheek on the top of Tommy's head, and Tommy relaxes. "Hey, dork," Tommy greets lightly, chuckling a bit.

"Hi," Ranboo mumbles. He makes no move to let go. Tommy just shakes his head slightly and edges back towards the stove. Ranboo lets him, and hangs on as Tommy continues making breakfast. "Looks good," Ranboo comments. He lifts his head up and Tommy tilts his own towards Ranboo, lips curled into a grin.

"Course it does – didn't you know I'm known as the *best* chef in all of England?" Tommy exclaims, waving his hands around.

Ranboo laughs. "My mistake, my mistake," Ranboo says amusedly.

"The *best chef* sure needed a lot of help with making the batter, then," Tubbo's voice comes, teasing. Ranboo glances over towards the entrance of the kitchen- Tubbo stands there, leaning against the doorframe. He looks entirely too fond.

Ranboo's heart squeezes.

"Shut up, Tubbo," Tommy retorts easily. Ranboo snorts, finally letting go of Tommy.

"He's got you there, Toms," he says, making his way towards Tubbo. Tubbo latches onto him as soon as he's close, beaming up at him. Ranboo presses his forehead briefly against Tubbo's in greeting- he's not sure if Tubbo still likes headbutts, but he always liked them before.

Tubbo's beam grows even brighter, and Ranboo knows he made the right choice. Tommy blusters in the background, "He absolutely does *not!*"

"Hi, Boo," Tubbo whispers, ignoring Tommy. Ranboo grins back, pulling Tubbo close.

"Hi, Bee." Tubbo snuggles in closer, linking his arms tightly around Ranboo's back. Ranboo threads his hand through Tubbo's hair, tugging lightly at the strands.

“Ugh, there you go again, being all sickeningly sweet,” Tommy complains. When Ranboo glances up he’s got an annoyed face plastered on, but Ranboo knows better. It comes across more fond than anything. “Thought I was finally safe from this,” he adds on further. Tubbo just flips him the bird.

“Fuck off, prick,” he says lightly. He doesn’t make any move to let go of Ranboo. Ranboo’s not complaining.

Tommy gasps in offense. “How *dare* you?” He asks exaggeratedly. Ranboo just rolls his eyes and frees one arm from around Tubbo.

“Stop being jealous and just get in here,” he says. Tommy glares playfully.

“And what if I don’t want to-”

“Shut up. Join hug.” Tubbo demands into Ranboo’s shirt. Tommy laughs, letting his annoyed mask fall off and making his way over.

He latches onto Ranboo’s side, wrapping his arms around the both of them. “This is rather clingy of you, Tub-” He starts.

Tubbo cuts him off by stomping on his foot. Tommy’s teasing veers off into a high-pitched scream. “Fuck *you*, Tubbo!” He yells in offense.

“Shut up. Just hug.”

“*Ugh.*”

Tommy acquiesces, though, and they stand there for a while. They were *never* this physically affectionate before, but- Ranboo likes this, honestly. After all that pain, all that indecision and insecurity and *fear*, it’s...nice having this sort of assurance.

It’s still hard to believe that they’re *here*.

Ranboo’s pulled from his thoughts by the smell of something burning. “Uh...guys,” he starts nervously. “The, uh-”

“*Fuck,*” Tommy curses, scrambling over towards the stove. Ranboo turns to look, arms falling away from Tubbo, and- yup, sure enough, the stove’s on fire.

Great.

“So much for being the *best chef*,” Tubbo says cuttingly. He just laughs as Tommy flashes a glare over his shoulder.

“Shut the fuck *up*, bitch!”

And all Ranboo can do is laugh.

In the end, the pancakes are barely salvageable. The bacon was rescued seconds before it, too, would've been burnt beyond repair, and the sausage had been done for a while. Tubbo confides quietly to Ranboo that he was the one to make the sausage- "Tommy'll take credit," he whispered. "But it was really me."

Ranboo laughs and doesn't call Tommy out on it when he does, indeed, take credit. "This sausage is really good," he says instead, and just snorts when Tommy preens.

"Thank you, thank you, I'll be here all week," he states overdramatically.

Tubbo throws a sausage at him. Ranboo can't stop laughing at Tommy's yelp for at *least* a few minutes.

He's so happy.

Afterwards, they all make the unspoken decision to not leave the house. Instead, they pile on the couch in Ranboo's living room, and watch movies. Ranboo forces them to watch some of the classics from his childhood – seriously, how have *none* of them seen Studio Ghibli? It's a tragedy, it is. Ranboo shows him all his favorites. Tommy will never admit that he cried during Howl's Moving Castle; Tubbo will likewise never let it go.

Ranboo finds that his new goal is to make Tubbo cry watching a movie. He is *entirely* too composed during the entirety of every movie they watch.

Once they get sick of watching movies, they finally get to play UNO in person. It's- slightly terrifying, being around Tubbo when he's losing. Tommy acts all angry, but doesn't actually do anything. Tubbo, on the other hand, will genuinely punch Ranboo if he makes him draw four cards.

Case in point-

"Tubbo," Ranboo draws out teasingly. "Draw-"

"Ranboo, if you make me draw four, I'll punt you to the fucking sun," Tubbo says calmly.

Ranboo weighs how much he cares about his life versus how much he wants Tubbo to lose, and finds his own life lacking. "I'm actually going to make you draw eight, actually," he says, placing down *two* draw-fours.

Tubbo just stares at the stack of cards, for a moment. Tommy laughs, sorting out his own cards and eyeing Ranboo in amusement. "Good luck, Ran," he says amusedly. "You'll need it."

Shrugging, Ranboo edges slightly away from Tubbo. "I'll take my chances."

And then- Tubbo just launches himself at Ranboo. Ranboo yelps, desperately trying to hold Tubbo back. "Tubbo, c'mon, you wouldn't kill me, would you?" Ranboo pleads laughingly.

"No, but-" Tubbo ducks his head, and-

“Did you just- did you just freaking *bite* me?!” Tubbo leans back, an innocent grin plastered onto his face. Tommy seems to have lost all of his composure, tumbled back onto his back and losing his shit.

“I can neither confirm nor deny,” Tubbo states. Ranboo eyes him, just a little bit of terror pouring through his veins.

“How are you more scary *now*? ”

“I don’t have my nukes anymore. I’ve gotta compensate.”

Ranboo stares at him, eyes wide. “That is a *terrifying* answer, thank you!”

Tubbo beams. “You’re welcome,” he chirps. He draws his eight cards- *finally*- and instantly an evil grin comes across his face. “Oh, Tommy,” he sings, sorting through his cards. Tommy instantly stops laughing, eyeing him warily.

“Yeah, Tubbo?” he asks carefully. Tubbo just gives him a closed-mouth smile.

“Draw sixteen.” Tubbo places *four* plus-fours on the table. Tommy stares at them, for longer than is probably healthy.

Then he yells, “Oh, come *on!*” and Ranboo can’t stop himself from bursting into laughter again.

-

Ender, Ranboo doesn’t think he’s ever been this happy in his life.

Living with Tubbo and Tommy again- it’s more than he could’ve ever dreamed of. He gets to hear their laughter in person. He gets to ruffle Tommy’s hair to piss him off again, and give Tubbo piggy-back rides. He gets to run his fingers through their hair again. He gets to hug them, feel their warmth pressed up against him as they just relax.

He gets to kiss them on the foreheads again. Gets to tell them he loves them in *person*. It- it makes everything feel so much more real.

They’re here. They’re here, and they’re real.

Tommy and Tubbo seem just as happy as Ranboo is- Ranboo doesn’t think he’s seen either of them stop smiling for more than a few moments at a time. It’s only been a day, but the painful vice that’s been crushing down Ranboo’s heart for *so long* is practically gone. It’s *such* a relief. It’s so- it’s so good.

He makes sure to tell them that he loves them as much as he can. It flusters them- not as much as it used to, but it still makes Tommy flush bright red and Tubbo duck his head in embarrassment. Ranboo’s determined to make them used to it. He knows that eventually... eventually the two are going to have to leave; Tommy’s still got college, and Tubbo can only be away from home for so long. They’ll have to leave eventually, but they’re here now.

And Ranboo's going to make the most of it.

Chapter End Notes

*We were opposites at birth
I was steady as a hammer
No one worried cause they knew just where I'd be
And they said you were the crooked kind
And that you'd never have no worth
But you were always gold to me*

-always gold, radical face

i've been so excited to post this chapter ever since i started writing it; the reunion is hands-down my favorite scene of the whole story haha

i hope you all enjoyed <3 thanks for reading!!

explanations

Chapter Summary

“You know,” Tubbo starts casually, a couple days after they’ve arrived at Ranboo’s house. “We should probably tell the others that you’re alright.”

Tommy winces, pulling out his phone and staring down at it. “Yeah, uh,” he says, “Wilbur and Phil and Dream and everyone have kinda been blowing up my phone for uh. Ages.”

Ranboo looks between them both, eyes wide. “You guys haven’t answered *anyone*?” He asks, voice high. Tommy narrows a glare at him.

“You do *not* get to talk, mister blocked-everyone.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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Ranboo looks between them both, eyes wide. “You guys haven’t answered *anyone*?” He asks, voice high. Tommy narrows a glare at him.

“You do *not* get to talk, mister blocked-everyone.” It’s gratifying how Ranboo sinks back a bit, flustered. Tommy shakes his head, sighing, and opens his phone.

Instantly, the number of unread messages makes him wince again. “Who...” Tommy trails off. “Who should we call first?”

Tubbo gives him a deadpan look. “Is that even a question?” He asks dryly. Tommy sighs again.

“Yeah, I know.” He clicks open his contacts, and within seconds, finds Wilbur’s name. “Here goes nothing, I guess,” he says.

It only takes a few seconds for Wilbur to pick up. “Tommy-fucking-innit,” Wilbur greets. Tommy winces at the low, angry tone in his best friend’s voice. “Where the *hell* have you been?”

“Wilbur- Wil, listen, I can explain,” Tommy tries. Wilbur cuts him off.

“You’d better fucking be able to.” Wilbur’s voice loses a bit of his anger, and the worry that emerges just makes Tommy’s heart ache more. “Toms- you scared the *shit* out of us. First Ranboo, and then you and Tubbo- are they both alright? Where are you?”

Tommy glances up and laughs shakily as he meets Tubbo and Ranboo’s eyes. “Well,” Tommy says. “About- about that.” Instead of attempting to explain, Tommy just turns on his camera, pulling his phone away from his ear.

He turns the camera towards Tubbo and Ranboo, who wave awkwardly. “Hi,” Tubbo says. Ranboo echoes him, grinning nervously. Wilbur is silent, which is...a first. Tommy normally doesn’t startle Wilbur into silence.

“Uh,” Wilbur starts. He sounds utterly *baffled*. Tommy can’t help but snort.

“Eloquent, Wil,” Tommy teases. The fact that Wilbur doesn’t immediately tell Tommy to shut up really shows how surprised he really is.

Wilbur says slowly, “...Hi, guys.” A pause, then a halted laugh. “I can’t say I was expecting this.”

Ranboo snorts. “Me neither, that’s for sure,” he says dryly. Tommy shakes his head.

“You *should’ve* expected it, dumbass,” Tubbo tells Ranboo. Ranboo sighs, and when Tubbo leans in slightly he wraps an arm around his shoulder.

“I know that *now*,” he says mulishly. Tommy stifles a snicker, and returns his attention to Wilbur. Wilbur still looks shell-shocked.

“So- yeah.” Tommy runs a hand through his hair, and laughs awkwardly. “Ranboo was being a prick, so we had to go beat the sense into him.”

Wilbur’s *still* staring. It takes a few moments for him to move. Then, he sighs, pulling his glasses off and rubbing between his eyes. “I can’t really say I’m surprised,” Wilbur mutters lowly. “You two have always been fucking insane.”

Tommy shares a look with Tubbo, before they both beam. “Thanks!” They chirp in unison. Wilbur audibly sighs again.

“That’s- okay, whatever. Look, I’m glad you three are together, and Ranboo, I’m glad you’re alright. But...” Wilbur levels his eyes at the camera, serious. “You three need to understand just how much you *scared* us. Ranboo- I don’t know what was going on, and as much as I want to know, unless you want to tell me it’s not my business. But- you blocking us, that was *terrifying*.”

Ranboo hunches over a bit, bowing his head. “...I’m sorry,” he whispers. Wilbur shakes his head.

“Don’t be sorry. I’m just glad you’re alright, okay?” Wilbur reassures. “You obviously had your reasons, and Tommy and Tubbo seem to have helped you figure it out, but- don’t do that again, alright? We all worry about you, too.”

Tommy shakes his head as Ranboo’s eyes widen in awe. Someday, Ranboo’ll understand just how integral he is to all their lives. “...I won’t, Wil,” Ranboo promises quietly. “I promise.”

Wilbur adopts a small smile. “Good,” he says. His eyes shift over slightly, and Tommy can’t help but sit up straighter. “As for you two,” Wilbur continues. “I- I wanna be pissed at you for running off like that, but- well, Ranboo obviously needed you.”

Tubbo and Tommy both nod vigorously, leaning into Ranboo’s side. Wilbur’s expression seems to grow a little softer. He says, “I’m proud of you both for helping him. I really am. Just-”

And at this point, Wilbur’s face shutters the slightest amount. For the briefest second, he looks close to tears. “Please, boys,” he whispers. “At least let us know if you’re going to drop off the map like that?” Ender, Wilbur sounds so *afraid*, for a moment.

Tommy glances over at Tubbo and nods slowly. “We will,” Tommy responds, subdued.

Tubbo adds on, “Sorry, Wil.”

Wilbur shakes his head. “Don’t be sorry. Just don’t do it again, alright? You really scared us.”

“Alright,” they all chorus again. Wilbur’s smile grows wider, and he leans forward a bit in his seat.

“Okay, now that we’ve got that over with,” Wilbur says, “What’ve you three been up to?” A grin splits Tommy’s lips, and he shares an eager look with Tubbo and Ranboo.

“Wil, it’s been *so much fun*- well, first off, it’s hot as *fuck* here-”

They spend the good portion of an hour talking to Wilbur. Tommy feels lighter just speaking to him – he’s missed Wilbur, the past few days; it’s nice being able to talk to him again. And seeing Tubbo’s and especially Ranboo’s faces light up is just a bonus. Eventually, though, Wilbur lets them go. “You’d better call Phil and Techno at some point, though,” he warns. “I’ll let everyone know you’re alright, but they’ve been freaking out about as much as I have and talking to you will help.”

Tommy winces slightly. He...really hadn’t thought about how much his second family would be panicking if he didn’t answer, huh. “We will,” he vows. Wilbur nods in satisfaction, smiling softly.

“Love you boys,” he says. Tommy flushes slightly; it still makes him feel a ridiculous amount of warmth inside when Wilbur says he loves him. Ranboo looks just as flustered; Tubbo just smiles, but Tommy knows that he’s blushing internally.

“Love you too,” he replies. “Talk to you later, Wil.”

“Later.” And with that, Wilbur hangs up. Tommy sinks back into the couch, leaning his head against Ranboo’s shoulder. And *fuck*, if he hadn’t missed having Ranboo to lean against constantly. With Tubbo, he was always the one being leaned *against*. It’s about time the scales evened out.

Ranboo lets out a little sigh, and when Tommy glances up, he’s biting his lip. He still looks ridiculously emotional. “Ranboo?” Tommy questions. Ranboo shakes his head slightly.

“I...” he starts. He closes his eyes, and whispers, “I didn’t expect all of them to care as much as they do.”

Tommy rolls his eyes, and from the quiet yelp Ranboo lets out, he’d bet Tubbo just punched him. “Don’t be an idiot, Ranboo,” Tubbo scolds. Ranboo laughs softly, rubbing at his ribs.

“Yeah,” he says. “Don’t worry. I know better, now.”

Smiling slightly, Tommy nods in satisfaction. “Fuckin’ good,” he says. “Our flight over here had to be good for *something*.”

Ranboo lets out one of his wheezes, and Tommy grins a little bit more. Ranboo regains his composure quickly, though, and says consideringly, “You know, guys...we probably should call Dream too, huh.”

Tommy slumps. “...Yeah, probably,” he admits. “We did just kinda- ditch him. Twice. Knowing him, he’s probably frantic.”

Tubbo snorts a little bit. “Yeah. It’s kinda weird having him be this much of a worrywart this time ‘round.”

“Just another difference from last time, I guess,” Ranboo shrugs. He grins. “It’s nice, though. Having Dream *not* be a murderous psychopath is a good thing, I think.”

Tommy lets out a laugh. “Yeah, definitely,” he says in amusement. He glances up towards Ranboo. “You wanna do the honors, then?”

Ranboo sighs. “Yeah, I’d better, since I kinda started this whole thing.” Ranboo closes his eyes and takes in a deep breath. Tubbo reaches out and squeezes his hand, silently supportive. Tommy hands him Ranboo’s phone, looking him in the eyes.

“You’ll be fine,” he reminds. Ranboo breathes out.

“Yeah,” he says, “I know.” Ranboo doesn’t wait any longer before picking up his phone and navigating to discord, calling Dream the next instant. He’d unblocked everyone the first day Tommy and Tubbo arrived, but he hasn’t reached out, even as many had reached out to him first.

Dream takes a little longer to pick up, but eventually he does. “Ranboo?” he asks. Tommy winces a bit at the lingering panic still audible.

“Hey, Dream,” Ranboo says tentatively. Dream lets out an audible sigh of relief.

“Dude, Ranboo, where’ve you *been?*” he asks. “You- you scared the *shit* out of us. Not that we’re pissed, or anything!” Dream hurries to reassure. “I just- we were worried.”

Ranboo lets out a bit of a sigh, glancing at Tommy and Tubbo both. “I’m...I’m alright now, Dream.” A small smile crosses his lips. “I needed- I needed a bit of a reminder, but I got the sense knocked into me eventually.”

“Fuck yeah you did,” Tommy pipes in, grinning. Ranboo shoots him a fondly exasperated look; Tubbo laughs.

Dream says slowly, “...Wait. Was that- was that *Tommy?*” Tommy instantly slaps his hands over his mouth, eyes going wide.

Oops.

“Haha, hi, Dream,” Tommy laughs awkwardly.

“Holy shit- *Tommy!*” Weirdly, Dream sounds just as relieved. It’s just like with Ranboo- oh. Tommy...did kinda drop off the map after that last stream with Dream, huh. Whoops. “You’re with Ranboo?! Is Tubbo there too?!”

Even though Dream can’t see him, Tubbo still gives a little wave. “Hi, Dream,” he says, a nervous smile on his face.

A pause. “All of you are- can any of you- what the fuck *happened?! Why* are you with *Ranboo?*”

Knots tangle in Tommy’s stomach. He shares a look with Ranboo, biting his lip nervously. “It’s- it’s a long story, Dream,” Tommy answers hesitantly.

Dream lets out a frustrated sigh. “Look, guys- first off, I’m *so* glad you’re okay. I-” Dream cuts himself off, and horrifyingly, when he starts speaking again, he sounds choked up. “I obviously messed up during that call with you, Ranboo- and I’m really sorry about that. I just- I want to know *what* I did wrong.”

He sounds quietly frantic, a desperate tinge to his voice. Tommy’s stomach knots up even more. Ranboo opens and closes his mouth a couple of times. Tubbo’s clammed up. He looks more nervous than he has in a while.

None of them know what to say.

“...Dream, can we mute for a sec?” Tommy finally forces out.

Dream doesn’t respond for a bit. He can practically imagine Dream’s confused face on the other end, but eventually he responds, “Yeah, uh, sure. I’ll be here.”

“Thanks.” Ranboo mutes them. Tommy sits back from Ranboo so that he can face him and Tubbo more easily; he sees Tubbo do the same.

“Guys,” Ranboo says. His voice is shaking a bit, obviously nervous. “What do we do?”

Tubbo's quiet. Tommy can see the gears turning in his head, so Tommy prompts, "Tubbo?"

He takes a little while to respond. "...What if we tell him?" Tubbo finally asks, voice barely above a whisper. All Tommy can do is stare at him, for a bit.

"What?!" He exclaims. "Tell him-" Tommy lowers his voice into a harsh whisper. "Tell him about *everything*?"

Tubbo shakes his head. Tommy glances quickly over at Ranboo, he looks contemplative. "Not everything," Tubbo says. "Just...the relevant stuff. You know, being- from the SMP, and that stuff."

"Why?!" Tommy demands. "We've- we haven't told anyone for *so long*, so-"

"Dream kinda deserves to know, though," Ranboo breaks in. Tommy jerks his head towards Ranboo.

"Ranboo-"

"No- listen, Tommy," Ranboo cuts off, not cruelly. "Tommy, he knows why I freaked out. You *saw* how concerned he is- do you really think we'll be able to come up with an explanation that'll make sense? With Wil we could, because he didn't see me freak out, but- Dream's smart enough to know that I wasn't just having a freak-out for no reason."

Tommy's shoulders slump slightly. Tubbo adds, "Tommy, you also freaked out on him. Dream's- you saw how freaked out he was. He deserves to have some sort of explanation."

And- Tommy knows they're right. He knows, but- "What if-" Tommy can't help but ask, voice shakier than he'd like. "What if he's-"

Tubbo rolls his eyes and reaches across Ranboo to place a hand on top of Tommy's. "You know he's not the same," Tubbo reminds gently.

Tommy sighs. "...Yeah, I know." He eyes Tubbo and Ranboo both. "You guys really think that this is a good idea?"

Tubbo and Ranboo share a look. "I can't think of any other way to explain it," Ranboo says. "And-" he shrugs slightly. "Who knows, maybe it'll help, in the long run."

Looking between them, Tommy breathes out heavily. "Alright," he gives in. "Yeah, this is- this is probably the best bet." Ranboo gives him a proud smile. Tubbo squeezes his hand one more time and then lets go.

"We'd better unmute, then," Tubbo says. Tommy nods, and Ranboo does the honors.

Dream doesn't say anything when they unmute, but the silence feels impatient anyway. "So, uh, Dream," Tommy starts, "We have something to tell you."

"I'm listening," is all that Dream says. He doesn't *sound* impatient, at least, which makes a little bit of the tension ease from Tommy's shoulders.

Tommy glances at Tubbo and Ranboo – as much as Tubbo'd seemed confident that this was the way to go, and Ranboo seemed convinced that they have to do this, Tommy can tell they don't want to be the ones to say it. "It's...really a long story, Dream, so do us a favor and don't interrupt until the end?"

This time, there's a bit of a pause. "...Okay," Dream agrees, though he sounds a little hesitant. "Go ahead, guys."

Taking in a deep breath, Tommy begins, "Okay...uh, the thing I guess we need to start with is that we aren't...from here. Well- we are, but-" Tommy cuts himself off- how is he supposed to *explain* this?

Thankfully for Tommy, Tubbo picks up, "Okay, so for me and Tommy, you know we met through Tommy raiding me, and we became friends after that, right?"

"...Yeah?" Dream says, a questioning lilt at the end. Tubbo nods.

"What you *don't* know is in actuality, me and Tommy met-" Tubbo breaks off to meet Tommy's eyes. Then, he closes his own and says, "We met in a completely different world."

"Where we originally met, I had already been adopted by Wilbur," Tommy continues quickly. "I can't really remember where I was before Wilbur found me, but I do know that before him, I didn't really have any family."

"Tommy picked me up soon after," Tubbo chimes in. Slight humor dances in his eyes, and he glances at Tommy as he says, "He found me in a box, apparently."

Tommy snorts. "Yeah, on the side of the road," he says in amusement.

"Wait," Ranboo breaks in. "You never told me that!" He says incredulously. Tommy can't stop himself from laughing a bit, and Tubbo full-out cackles. The nervousness in Tommy's shoulders leeches out just a little bit more.

"Anyways," Tommy continues, bringing them back on track, "Long story short, me and Tubbo – and Ranboo, but we didn't meet him until a *while* after – are from...well, from a different world, and each of you kinda...have counterparts, there." Tommy bites his lip, and waits for...for *any* sort of response.

There's a long, drawn-out silence, before Dream lets out a huff of breath. "...I really shouldn't believe you," Dream states. Tommy can't help but stiffen up. "But- it does make sense. Kind of. You- it took a *shockingly* short amount of time for you two to bond with Ranboo," Dream says thoughtfully. "And I didn't really follow you beforehand, but Tommy, Tubbo, you both have always seemed much closer than two years would allow."

Tommy shares a soft grin with Tubbo and Ranboo, reaching out and grabbing Tubbo's hand while leaning more against Ranboo. "What can I say," Tommy says. His smile gains a mischievous glint, and he states, "We were simply meant to be."

He promptly laughs as Tubbo smacks him with his free hand and Ranboo tips his head back, groaning. “You *suck*,” Tubbo complains. Tommy just laughs more.

“But- wait, wait, wait,” Dream breaks in. “What does this- what does this have to do with what I said? About the lore?” Ranboo winces, and Tommy’s smile tips downwards.

Ranboo takes a deep breath, letting it out slowly. Tommy lets go of Tubbo’s hand to place it on Ranboo’s knee, rubbing soothing circles into it. “The thing is, Dream,” Tubbo starts slowly, “Is that, well, when Tommy and I were about fifteen, me, him, and Wilbur moved into this new area. Wilbur wanted to explore, and me ‘n Tommy were just along for the ride.”

“The new area was called Esemipi,” Tommy says carefully. “And, there, we met new friends. It was fun, for a while, but eventually shit started happening, and, well...”

Tubbo continues, “Stuff started going wrong.” He fiddles a bit with his hands, and then just shakes his head. “Okay, Dream- you’re gonna have to suspend your disbelief for a sec.”

“I’ve already been doing that,” Dream cuts in dryly. Tommy snorts a little, but the nervous knots are back.

Tommy says, “Okay, but- Dream, what you don’t know is that the SMP *is* Esemipi.”

Another pause. “What do you mean?” Dream asks, voice carefully controlled. Tommy winces a bit.

“We mean that this story we’ve been acting out, with L’Manberg, and the election and Pogtopia and my exile- that *was* our life.”

“We always knew what was going to happen,” Tubbo says quietly. “We knew Schlatt was going to win. We knew the control room was going to happen. We-” and here Tubbo’s voice grows even quieter- “I knew that I was going to die during the festival before we even planned it out.”

There’s a long, long silence. “...How?” Dream finally breathes. “We- okay, I- I don’t *not* believe you, but what’s going to happen next?”

Tommy and Tubbo share a look and shrug in unison. “I get let out by Sam in a few days- you’re left alone again. But, honestly, I don’t know much about what happens next. We kinda...stayed away, after that.” Tommy pauses, then says even quieter, “Wilbur gets resurrected sometime soon, too.”

Dream inhales sharply. “Yeah, that’d make sense,” Dream says quietly. He’s quiet for another long moment. “*Fuck*,” he finally curses. His voice is shaking slightly. “Tommy- are you saying that- that your acting during Exile, and during the prison, that- that was *real*?”

Tommy winces. “...Sometimes,” he admits quietly. “It was way worse during Exile. I’m mostly- I’ve mostly disconnected everything, now, but...yeah, it did suck, sometimes.” Ranboo wraps an arm around Tommy’s shoulders and pulls him closer. Tommy glances up at him and gives him a brief smile in thanks.

“*Why?*” Dream asks. He sounds absolutely *devastated*. “Why would you let me *do* that?”

“Trust me,” Tubbo breaks in, deadpan. “I wondered the exact same thing.” Tommy shrugs helplessly.

“It was different enough, most of the time,” he explains. “The- most of the streams were way better than- than Exile really was. It *was* genuinely fun playing around with Drista and Ranboo and whoever else visited, and when you weren’t being a bitch, you were fun, too.” Tommy glances at Tubbo out of the corners of his eyes and his smile grows a little more genuine. “Tubbo helped a lot, too.”

Dream breathes out shakily. “So...Ranboo,” he addresses Ranboo, and Ranboo sits up a little straighter. “You freaked out so much because...your character did the TNT? And you didn’t remember?”

Ranboo’s shoulders slump a bit. “...Yeah,” he whispers.

“God- Ranboo, I came up with that on a whim!” Dream exclaims. “I don’t even know if we’ll come up with something else for that, or if your character had a choice, or- or anything!” His voice grows a little more pleading, and he says, “You have to know that it wasn’t your fault.”

Ranboo’s silent for a moment. Tommy nudges him, snuggling in a bit closer. Tubbo does the same on his other side. “...I know,” he finally says, quiet. “I know.”

“Good,” Dream breathes. “I-” Dream cuts himself off, before he states, more strongly. “I do believe you. I do.” Tommy’s shoulders finally relax fully. “Still...*why* do it, in the first place? And why stick with it as long as you have?”

Tommy says dryly, “I mean, we are still content creators, Dream. At first, it was to find Ranboo- you had a lot more outreach than we had at the time, and, well,” Tommy glances up at Ranboo, “It did end up working, in the end.”

Ranboo lets out a bit of a laugh. “I did find you guys through the SMP, yeah,” he says quietly.

“And then I kept going because everyone was enjoying it, and also you all were too.” Tommy smiles helplessly and shrugs a bit. “I didn’t wanna disappoint you guys.”

Tubbo shakes his head and mutters under his breath, “Stupid fucking reasoning.” He’s got the hint of a fond smile playing at his lips, though, so Tommy just smiles innocently at him.

Dream sighs. “Tommy, you are insane,” he says. He also sounds fond. “I- I wouldn’t have been *disappointed* if you didn’t want to act out me manipulating you for like, a month. Thank god we cut it off sooner.”

Tommy laughs embarrassedly, rubbing the back of his head. “Yeah, that was a good call,” he says.

“Well, I’m sure as hell not going to be breaking out any time soon,” Dream decides. “I’m going to give you a break.”

Snorting, Tommy agrees, “Alright, Dream.” Tommy pauses. “We still do need to act out me escaping, though.”

“Well, uh. We’ll make it quick,” Dream blusters a bit. Then, he adds on excitedly, “Actually, let’s just kill off my character!”

Tommy lets out a startled laugh. “Dream,” he protests, still laughing, “You can’t- you can’t just *do* that!”

“It’s my character, I do what I want.”

“But-”

Dream lets out a laugh as well, and before Tommy knows it all of them are cackling.

After a little while, Dream sobers up. “So,” he starts, still sounding a little breathless from laughter, “Are you going to stream while at Ranboo’s?” Tommy can’t see him, but he gives off the energy of someone raising his eyebrows. “Your rooms aren’t like- at all similar.”

Tommy shrugs, sharing a look with Tubbo and Ranboo. “We’ll make it work,” he says. Dream lets out a bit of a laugh.

“Okay, I’ll trust you guys,” he says in amusement. He takes a second, but then states, quiet, more sincere, “Thanks for telling me, guys. I’ll- I’ll be careful, from now on. I’m not going to-” Dream’s voice goes even softer. “I’m not letting you get hurt. Not again.”

“Thanks, Dream,” Tommy says quietly. “We appreciate it.”

Tubbo adds on, “Thanks for being not a psychopath!” At that, all four of them laugh.

“Yeah, uh, no problem,” Dream chuckles. “I’ll talk to you guys later, okay?”

“Alright. Bye, Dream.” With that, Ranboo presses for them to leave the call. A comfortable quiet falls between them. Tommy lays his head on Ranboo’s shoulder, letting his eyes slip closed.

After a while, Ranboo whispers, “Well, I guess that’s that.”

“Yeah,” Tubbo murmurs. Tommy nods sleepily, already nodding off.

That was easier than he thought it would be. He’s glad it’s over.

-

Later, after their impromptu nap, they make good on their promise to call Phil and Techno.

“Thank *god*,” Phil breathes as soon as he answers Ranboo’s call. Ranboo winces a little at the pure *relief* in Phil’s voice. He- he really didn’t think he would’ve scared them *this* badly.

“Hi, Phil,” Ranboo greets hesitantly. Phil lets out a sigh, turning on his camera. Ranboo turns on his own, and smiles slightly at the way Phil seems to relax even more at the sight of Ranboo’s face.

“You can’t just *do* that, mate,” Phil says. The still-obvious worry emanating from Phil’s voice makes Ranboo blink rapidly. He *really* doesn’t want to cry again, so he takes a deep breath in, letting it out slowly.

“I’m sorry,” he whispers. Phil shakes his head, a small smile tugging at his lips.

“Don’t be sorry, kiddo. I’m just glad you’re alright.” Ranboo swipes at his eyes and grins slightly.

A soft ping sounds. “Hullo, Ranboo,” Techno greets. Ranboo’s smile grows a little bit wider.

“Hi, Techno,” he greets. Techno doesn’t turn on his camera, but Ranboo can hear the smile in his voice.

Techno says, sounding relieved, “I’m really glad you’re okay, kid,” and that’s what finally sends tears streaming down Ranboo’s cheeks.

“Sorry for scaring you both,” Ranboo whispers, wiping at his cheeks. “I...I missed you.”

Phil’s smile quirks a little higher, sympathy shining in his eyes. “We missed you too, Ranboo,” he says softly. “You’re okay now, right? Not gonna do it again?”

Ranboo shakes his head, wiping at his tears. Just that second, a faint yell comes from the kitchen – “Tubbo, you’re throwing off my groove!” “Well, just stop screwing up, and maybe I wouldn’t *have* to help you!” – and Ranboo snorts, grinning fondly. They’d watched Emperor’s New Groove the day before, and now *you threw off my groove!* is Tommy’s new favorite saying.

He focuses back on the screen to see Phil blinking. “Was that Tommy and Tubbo?” He asks, surprised. Ranboo sighs, burying his head in his hands.

“Figures we wouldn’t be able to keep it secret again,” he mutters, before raising his voice. “Uh- yeah, hold on. Hey, idiots, get out here!” He calls behind him. He barely hears Techno snort, and Phil shakes his head in amusement.

Tommy bolts around the corner, retorting, “Don’t call me an idiot, *Ranboob*- oh, Phil!” His face lights up, and he b-ines to sit next to Ranboo on the couch. He gives Ranboo a sullen look. “You didn’t tell me you were calling them!” He complains.

Tubbo jumps over the couch to sit next to Tommy, and yells, “Yeah, how could you!” Ranboo shakes his head and sighs.

“I *literally* did tell you,” he says dryly. “You weren’t listening.”

“Well then tell me *better*,” Tommy demands childishly. Ranboo just bows his head and tries to hide the way he’s grinning.

“Will definitely do next time,” he agrees dryly. Phil lets out a bit of a laugh. Ranboo looks back to see a fond glint in his eyes.

Phil says, “Well, glad to know you boys are doing alright.” Ranboo flushes a bit at the pure affection in his voice.

“Ah, yes, chaos, the sign that *Benchtrio* is fine,” Techno says teasingly. His voice is dry as always. Ranboo knows he’s grinning.

Tubbo furrows his brows. “Why are we even called that?” Tubbo questions. “The bench isn’t even a big thing for Ranboo.”

They all take a moment to think about it, before in unison they all shrug. “Couldn’t tell you,” Phil says. “Twitter’s a different breed.”

“True,” Tommy nods. “Fuck Twitter.”

“Fuck Twitter!” Tubbo echoes, and Ranboo raises an imaginary glass.

“I’ll toast to that,” he says, grinning. Within seconds, they’re all cracking up.

Phil wipes a tear from his eye. Ranboo notices his quick motions and raises his eyebrows questioningly. Phil just shakes his head and says, soft, “It’s just good to see all you boys like this.” His smile quirks a little higher. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen you this happy.”

Ranboo flushes a bit, but then yelps as Tommy drags him into a side-hug. “What’re you talking about,” Tommy says, laughing. “I hate them!”

“Sure,” Phil says dryly.

Techno chimes in, “Ew, affection, cringe.” All of them snort.

They all hang out on call for a little while longer – again, Phil demands that they tell him about what they’ve been up to. Ranboo and his best friends are all too happy to oblige. Later on, though, Techno says, “Wait. Wait, hold on.”

“Waiting,” Tubbo responds cheekily. Ranboo absently reaches over and smacks him. Tubbo flinches back as if Ranboo slapped him as hard as he could; Ranboo just laughs at him.

“I can’t believe you’ve done this,” Tubbo complains, but he’s grinning, too. Ranboo rolls his eyes.

“What’s up, Techno?” Ranboo asks.

Techno answers, “So you’re telling me that you’re all in California. Where I live.” Techno pauses, probably for dramatic effect. “And I have a car.”

Tommy instantly starts *vibrating* beside Ranboo. Ranboo sits up straight, eyes widening. “Are you saying what I think you’re saying?” Ranboo asks lowly.

“I am,” Techno says immediately. He actually sounds *excited*. Ranboo shares a wide-eyed look with Tommy and Tubbo. They look absolutely *shocked*, before wide grins replace their dropped jaws.

“...Holy shit,” Tubbo says slowly. “Holy *shit*- guys, we get to meet *the* Technoblade!”

Tommy parrots, “We’re gonna *meet Technoblade!* Holy fuck!”

“I changed my mind. I don’t want to come within two-thousand feet of you,” Techno states. Tommy sticks his tongue out at the screen.

“Too bad, you don’t have a choice!”

Techno sighs as if it’s the worst thing in the world. Ranboo knows better. “I *suppose* I’d better start figuring this out, then,” he says, drawn-out. Ranboo can’t stop himself from grinning even wider.

“Wait, are you telling me that *you little shits* get to meet Techno *before* me?!” Phil suddenly yells. Ranboo shares a look with Tommy and Tubbo and can’t stop himself from bursting into laughter.

“Yup! Sorry!” Tubbo chirps.

Phil sighs. “Unfair,” he complains, but he’s grinning. “Have fun, you fucks.”

Tommy smiles even wider. “Oh, we will.”

-

“I forgot how easily he can fall asleep even with noise around him.”

Tommy snorts, glancing at Ranboo. “Yeah, that hasn’t changed,” Tommy says. There’s a fond tinge to his voice. Ranboo’s heart grows warm at the way Tommy absently brushes his fingers through Tubbo’s hair. Tubbo snores, then, leaning into the gentle touch. Tommy yawns, too, pressing the back of his hand to his mouth to hide it.

Ranboo says, “Guess it’s time for bed.” Tommy nods sleepily, and Ranboo laughs as he has to stabilize Tommy when he stands up. “Don’t go falling asleep standing up,” Ranboo says amusedly. Tommy flips him off, the motions slow and tired.

“Don’ tell me what to do,” Tommy tells him, but starts trudging towards the stairs anyway. Ranboo shakes his head, and crouches down to gently shake Tubbo awake.

Tubbo’s face scrunches a bit, before his eyes crack open. ““Boo?” He mumbles.

“Hey,” Ranboo whispers. “I need to take you upstairs – we’re going to sleep now.” He instinctively brings a hand up to brush Tubbo’s hair away from his eyes; Tubbo tilts his head towards him. Ranboo’s heart goes soft. “Here,” Ranboo urges, turning around and offering his back to Tubbo. “Get on. I’ll carry you upstairs.”

Tubbo lets out a quiet little gasp, and it only takes a couple of seconds for Ranboo to feel Tubbo shift forward, pressing his chest against Ranboo's back and linking his arms around Ranboo's neck. Ranboo waits a couple of seconds more to make sure Tubbo's situated, and then stands up slowly. Tubbo's head lolls against Ranboo's neck.

Ranboo takes climbing back up the stairs slowly. He's- he missed this. He used to always have to take Tubbo up to their room, before; when Tubbo would spend too long working in his shop and eventually fall asleep there. It eventually became routine, where Ranboo would check to see if he was asleep and carry him back. Other times, when Ranboo was out late, Tubbo would get caught up in playing with Michael and fall asleep with Michael in his arms.

Those were Ranboo's favorite times, when he could find his family like that. The best was when Tommy was over, too, and Michael ended up sandwiched between them.

Ender, Ranboo misses Michael. His one consolation is that he knows Michael was doing well, with his own family, before Ranboo died.

Ranboo shakes himself from his thoughts, pushing open the door to his bedroom. Tommy's already splayed across the bed as if he owns the place, snoring loudly. Ranboo shakes his head in amusement. Tubbo's breath has evened back out again. Ranboo, honestly, wouldn't mind keeping Tubbo here in his arms for the rest of the night. Alas, his legs aren't strong enough for that.

"Down you get," Ranboo says softly, squatting down and tumbling Tubbo gently onto the bed. Tubbo whines a little, but when Tommy reaches out and tugs at his shirt, Tubbo turns over and faceplants into Tommy's stomach. They both snore in unison.

Ranboo doesn't think he's ever felt this fond.

He gets ready for bed quickly, changing and brushing his teeth. When he gets back, Tommy and Tubbo are completely tangled together. Silently, he crawls into bed next to them, splaying a blanket out over all of them. Tommy mumbles a bit, turning his head into Ranboo's shoulder. Ranboo shifts so he's on his side and throws an arm over the both of them.

Softly, gently, he lays a kiss on both of their foreheads.

They don't react. Ranboo simply smiles, and closes his eyes.

He falls asleep easily.

Chapter End Notes

thank you so much for reading <3 the response to the last chap was INSANE, thank you all so much for all the support :DDD

bliss

Chapter Summary

“Hello, boys!”

Tommy grins, spinning around in totally-his-chair. He side-eyes his chat as he sips on his coke, and snickers at the exclamations of shock. “What do you mean, *how do you have that chair?*” Tommy asks, feigning confusion. “I’ve always had this chair!”

user123: *no the fuck you have NOT*

user789: *hello 911 my streamer is a FUCKING LIAR*

user456: *explain what you’re doing in ranboo’s chair NOW*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Hello, boys!”

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“No,” Tommy says, frowning even though all he wants to do is laugh. “No- this is *my* chair, chat.”

The yelling just gets more violent. It’s *really* hard for Tommy not to laugh.

Originally, when Tommy had decided to stream, he was intending on just using the same greenscreen that he always used while at Tubbo’s and just using a plain, black chair. But then Tubbo’d suggested that they fuck with the viewers a bit, and Tommy was *instantly* on board.

Ranboo’d given them an exasperated look. “They’re going to be so annoyed,” he’d said. Tommy had grinned, sharing a look with Tubbo.

“That’s what makes it fun!” He’d chirped.

Ranboo had just sighed, shaking his head fondly.

Tommy has absolutely *no* regrets, though. This is entirely too fun. They have absolutely no intention of telling anyone outside of their friend group that they're meeting up – this meetup is for them and them alone – but they have no reservations with teasing the shit out of it. Even if everyone knows, they won't *know*, and Tommy thinks that's fucking hilarious.

What makes it even funnier is that Tommy plans on doing this during lore streams, too. This isn't one, he's just goofing off on Origins with Wilbur and a few others, but Tommy can't imagine how funny it'll be to have Dream manipulating him while he's in a fucking *unicorn* chair.

He can't fucking wait.

Joining call with Wilbur, Tommy proceeds to ignore his chat and go about playing around. It's nice, being able to play with them again – it's only been a week or so, but he'd missed it. Wilbur doesn't act like anything's out of the ordinary, feeding into the illusion that Tommy's still in the UK. No one believes it, of course, but it's still funny.

Ranboo and Tubbo are doing something downstairs, Tommy's not sure what. Probably baking – Ranboo's always enjoyed baking, and Tubbo's spending as much time as he can with him. Tommy'll join them in a couple of hours. There's a little shuffling sound from outside his door; Tommy glances over, but there's nothing. He shrugs, turning back towards the computer.

And then-

“*Ow*- what the fuck?!” Tommy exclaims as something hits him in his upper arm. He jerks his head down to see a nerf bullet- oh, those *fuckers*.

He spins his chair around entirely and just barely catches Tubbo's laughing face whipping back around the edge of the door. “You fucking suck!” He calls out, before turning back towards the computer. “Anyway,” he redirects, putting back on his headphones.

Wilbur asks, voice laced with amusement, “You good, Tommy?” Tommy smiles just a little too wide.

“I'm absolutely wonderful!” He states. An instant later, another bullet hits his temple.

Tommy doesn't react for a second, before he calmly takes off his headphones. “One moment,” he says calmly. He stands up from his chair, debating whether he should mute his stream or not before he ultimately decides not to. It's funnier that way.

He creeps towards the door, slow, and then bursts into motion. “You *fuckers*,” he exclaims, and tackles Tubbo, waiting on the other side of the door, to the ground.

Tubbo yelps, turning his body around under Tommy to shove at him. “Get *off*,” he laughs. Tommy lunges in closer, wrapping his arms around Tubbo and not letting go.

“Fuck you! You shot me! Bitch!”

“You deserved it!”

“What the fuck did I *do*?!”

“Everything!”

“Fuck you!”

“Fuck *you*!”

Tommy and Tubbo roll around in the hallway for a while. Ranboo’s just standing off to the side; Tommy’ll get him back at some point. He’s sure Ranboo had some part in it, too.

“You’re next, bitch!” He calls towards Ranboo. Ranboo just laughs, taking a video of them with his phone.

“Good luck with that,” he says in amusement.

Tommy flips him the bird, but climbs off of Tubbo and turns to go back into the room. “Don’t you *ever*-” he looks over his shoulder to glare at both Tubbo and Ranboo in turn- “Shoot me with a nerf gun again.”

Without waiting for a response, he goes back into the room, slamming the door and sitting back down. “Alright,” he says, pulling back on his headphones. “What’d I miss?”

There’s a silence for a moment. “Nothing,” Wilbur answers. He sounds like he’s holding back laughs. Tommy glances over at his chat – predictably, they’re freaking the fuck out. “Ready to get on with it?”

“Hell yeah I am!” Tommy cheers, getting himself situated again. He’s just placing his hands on his keyboard before-

Yet *another* bullet hits him in the temple.

“Sorry, Wilbur, gotta do something,” Tommy says quickly before he bolts out of the room, throwing his headphones behind him.

“RANBOO, YOU SON OF A *BITCH*!”

-

“Jesus, I get what you were saying, now, Tubbo,” Ranboo says, rubbing his jaw. “Tommy really does punch hard.”

Tommy cracks his knuckles threateningly. Ranboo eyes him with a little more fear than before. “And I’ll do it again if you shoot me again, bitch,” he shoots back. Tubbo just snorts.

“You love us,” Tubbo tells Tommy. Tommy makes a face at him.

“Die.”

Tubbo hums, as if thinking about it. “I don’t think I will, actually.”

Tommy steps towards Tubbo. “Then I’ll *make* you.”

“You can try, *bitch*, ” Tubbo retorts playfully, getting into a fighting stance. Ranboo sighs, rubbing his hand down his face so as to hide his grin.

“You two are absolutely *ridiculous*, ” he states, utterly fond. Ender, he missed seeing moments like these. He rubs his jaw once again, massaging gently at the bruise, and as he eyes Tommy an idea alights in his mind.

He starts slowly inching towards Tommy. Tommy’s attention is held by Tubbo- Tubbo’s eyes catch on Ranboo fairly quickly. Ranboo brings a finger up to his mouth to quiet Tubbo. Laughter dances in Tubbo’s eyes for a bit, but he turns his attention back towards Tommy moments later. “Well? You gonna do it?” Tubbo challenges, spreading his arms out wide. “I don’t have all day, Tommy, c’mon.”

Tommy pushes his sleeves up to his shoulders. They fall down immediately. He promptly ignores them. “Oh, it’s *on*, Tub- *whoa!*” Tommy’s taunt rises into a sharp yelp as Ranboo proceeds to tackle Tommy down to the ground. “Ranboo- get- fuck *off!*”

Ranboo pins down Tommy’s hands above his head, and grins down at him. “Consider this payback,” he tells Tommy. And then, he reaches down with one hand and dances his fingers up and down Tommy’s ribs.

Tommy *shrieks*. “No- Ranboo, please, don’t-” he laughs. Ranboo’s grin just widens and he releases Tommy’s arms in favor of tickling his ribs more aggressively.

“Oh, what was that? Ranboo’s the best person ever?” Ranboo asks. Tommy shakes his head, laughing helplessly.

He gasps out, “I’ll- I’ll never say that- *please, stop*, ” he begs, still giggling. Ranboo hums, stilling his motions and glancing up at Tubbo.

“I dunno, should I stop?” Tubbo hums, tapping his chin with one of his fingers.

“He kinda deserves this,” Tubbo says, drawing it out teasingly. “I dunno, Toms, what do you have to say for yourself?”

Tommy glares up at them, the effect ruined quite effectively by the way laugh lines are still carved into his face. “I’ll never give!” He cries. Ranboo shrugs.

“Guess there’s nothing to be done, then,” he states, and digs his fingers into Tommy’s armpits. Tommy starts flailing his limbs, shrieking and trying desperately to kick Ranboo off. Ranboo doesn’t give in. Tubbo just laughs, and sits down to enjoy the show.

After only a few seconds more, Tommy finally gasps out, “I give, I give! Please!”

“What’re the magic words, Tommy?” Ranboo asks, not letting up.

Tommy glares at him, the effect ruined by the way he's still smiling. "You're the best ever," he grits out.

Ranboo, laughing, finally lets up, getting up off of Tommy and sitting down on the floor next to him.

"That'll teach you to punch *me*," Ranboo states. Ender, his cheeks *hurt* from grinning. "You're so funny when you're tickled. I never knew."

Tubbo barks out a laugh. "Yeah," he says in amusement. He leans over to tug gently at one of Tommy's links of hair. "Toms has always been ridiculously ticklish. I haven't really done it much here, though."

Tommy grumbles, slapping Tubbo's hand away, "Yeah, fucking good." He pouts at Ranboo. "You're a fucking dickhead, Ranboob."

Ranboo grins angelically. "Don't punch me," he says, "And we won't have this problem."

Rolling his eyes, Tommy pouts, "Yeah, yeah, whatever." They're quiet for a bit, before Tommy loses his pout and his eyes light up. "Hey, Ranboo, can we go out exploring today?"

Ranboo thinks about it for a moment, before he shrugs. "I can't see why not," he says. Tommy and Tubbo both brighten up excitedly.

"Let's go, then!" Tubbo urges excitedly. Ranboo laughs.

"Yeah, let's go."

-

Ranboo takes them both around his hometown. It's endearing, seeing how they light up at the things Ranboo's grown up with – utterly mundane things that Ranboo's seen again and again yet are completely new to Tommy and Tubbo.

Tommy's utterly enraptured by the amount of statues they have. It's honestly ridiculous to Ranboo *just* how many structures they have, but Tommy *adores* it, getting just as excited with each new one that passes. It's incredibly adorable. Tubbo, meanwhile, picks up every single newspaper they come across, and when they find a coin just lying abandoned on the ground, he snaps it up with an amusing amount of glee.

Their eyes are both so *wide*. They look so utterly and completely happy; it makes Ranboo's heart feel ridiculously full. Ender, he's gotten soft.

"Is that the beach?!" Tubbo exclaims excitedly. Ranboo follows his vision and he nods as he sees that the ocean is indeed just barely visible up ahead.

"Yup. Wanna go see it?" Tubbo nods once vigorously, before he hesitates, glancing towards Tommy. Tommy grins easily and nods as well.

He reassures, "I'm fine with beaches now, guys." His smile gains a touch of melancholy, and he says more quietly, "That part of my life's over now."

Tubbo grabs his hand. "It sure fucking is," he states protectively. Ranboo shakes his head a bit, but he can't help but feel fond as he reaches to grab Tommy's other hand. Tommy swings them a bit, grinning up at him.

The walk to the beach doesn't take too long, and as soon as they get there Tubbo runs off. He barely manages to shake his shoes off before he gets to the water, and Ranboo sighs as Tubbo just runs in, heedless of the surf splashing up to soak his shorts. "He's going to be unbearably annoying later," Ranboo sighs to Tommy. Tommy just laughs.

"So am I!" He says cheerfully, before he also dashes off to join Tubbo. Ranboo just shakes his head. He settles in the sand near enough to watch them both goofing off – he has no desire to get soaked himself, thank you very much. He's gone swimming enough times in his life.

Tubbo lets out a yell and tackles Tommy, sending them both tumbling back into the water. Tommy resurfaces first and yells something Ranboo can't make out at Tubbo; Tubbo yells back. They're both grinning wildly as they both go quiet for a bit, heads bowed together. Then, they turn towards Ranboo, and- oh no.

Ranboo scrambles to his feet and immediately starts backing up. "Oh, Ranboo," Tommy calls out in a sing-song voice, starting to walk towards him. Tubbo follows.

"Don't you dare!" Ranboo calls out, turning and starting to stalk away. The panic in his veins grows as he glances over his shoulder and sees that both of his best friends are just *sprinting* at him. He starts sprinting, too.

He never stood a chance.

"Gotcha!" Tubbo yells, and suddenly Ranboo's got hands latched around one of his arms, dragging him backwards. Ranboo tries to yank himself away, but he can't- *dammit*, why does Tubbo have to be so *strong*?

Tommy latches onto his other arm, and Ranboo notes despairingly that he stands absolutely *no* chance, now.

All he can do is glare at his bastards as they gleefully tug him over and shove him backwards into the sea.

-

"You two absolutely *suck*," Ranboo mutters, wringing out his shirt. He levels them with a mulish glare. "You couldn't have at least let me take off my shirt before you shoved me in there?!"

Tommy and Tubbo share a look, before they meet Ranboo with equally innocent beams. "Nope!"

Ranboo stares at them, unimpressed. “You suck,” he repeats. Tubbo ignores this and tugs at his arm.

“Take us to get ice cream!” Tubbo demands. Ranboo just raises his eyebrows. Tubbo raises up on his tip-toes, and presses his hands together. “Please?” he begs.

Tommy’s also adopted his own puppy-dog eyes. Ranboo can only stare at them for a moment longer before he hangs his head, giving in. “Yeah,” he sighs. “Yeah, alright.”

They both cheer, and Ranboo can’t help but grin.

-

The next few days go by like this. Ranboo, without fail, wakes up to the sounds of either Tommy and Tubbo yelling at each other, or them talking loudly in the kitchen. On the rare day that Ranboo wakes up before them, he’ll sneak down to the kitchen to make them food. If Tommy wakes up first, he’ll sneak up behind Ranboo and wrap his arms around his chest, faceplanting into Ranboo’s shoulder blades. Tubbo loves to scare Ranboo by jumping up onto his back. Always, though, they cling on until they can’t anymore.

It’s good. It’s *so* good, and sometimes Ranboo thinks he might cry just thinking about it.

Fairly often, they go outside to explore the city. There’s always *so much* to do, and they have a lot of fun with it. But, honestly, Ranboo’s favorite moments aren’t the ones where they go out and find stuff to do.

Instead, it’s Tubbo’s little gasp of delight when they discover the family piano, eyes lighting up. It’s Tommy sliding onto the bench next to Tubbo, singing and harmonizing with him. It’s Tommy pushing Ranboo down to sit on the ground, running his fingers through Ranboo’s hair and threading tiny little braids into it. It’s Tubbo randomly laying down his head in Ranboo’s lap, heart-wrenchingly reminiscent to when he did that very same thing, all that time ago.

It’s Ranboo laughing so hard he can’t breathe. It’s Tommy cracking jokes and throwing stuff at them both, it’s Tubbo beaming at the inconsequential things and making songs out of anything. It’s all three of them just *being* together.

Tommy and Tubbo only arrived a week ago, but Ranboo’s loneliness and fear feel like they faded a lifetime ago.

“*Ranboo*,” Tommy whines, bringing Ranboo out of his thoughts. He demands, “Come kick Tubbo’s ass in Mario Kart with me!”

Ranboo laughs. “Alright, Tommy.” Tommy beams and holds out his hand.

And Ranboo takes it.

-

“Holy shit, it’s *Technoblade*!”

“That’s my name, don’t wear it out- *oof!*” Techno’s dry response is cut off by both Tommy and Tubbo ploughing into him with the force of two incredibly excited teenage boys. Techno blinks for a moment, clearly shocked, before it fades into fondness. He wraps his arms around their backs.

He sends an awkward little wave towards Ranboo. “Hey there, kid,” he greets. Ranboo waves back, snickering at the slight strain in Techno’s voice. Predictably, after only a few more seconds, Techno grunts, “Y’know, I’m glad to see you both, too, but I do kinda need to breathe.”

Tommy and Tubbo spring backwards, matching sheepish grins on their faces. “Sorry, Tech!” Tommy chirps. He’s bouncing a little on his toes, obviously elated. Tubbo’s a little more relaxed, but he was rambling excitedly just this morning about Techno coming to visit. Ranboo’s *well* aware of how overjoyed he is to finally see him in person.

Ranboo eyes Techno, a little hesitant. Techno rolls his eyes, and states, “Ranboo, if you want a hug, just go for it. These two have already squeezed the life out of me anyway- you can’t be worse than that.”

Snorting, Ranboo moves towards Techno and gets his own hug. He has to bend over a little, but Techno manages to envelop him anyway. For all that he carries a somewhat awkward air with him, Techno really does give good hugs. “Thanks for coming over,” Ranboo mutters. Techno huffs in amusement.

“Course, kid.” He leans back a bit, and Ranboo takes the hint, leaning back and meeting Techno’s eyes. Techno’s eyes flicker towards Tubbo and Tommy, and he says, “All three of my favorite chaotic children are here. There was no way I wouldn’t come over.” He gains a little bit of a cheeky glint to his grin. “Plus, now I get to lord over Wilbur that I met you first, so.” Tommy snorts, before breaking into laughter. Tubbo’s laughs join soon after.

Ranboo snorts, stepping back fully from the hug. “You’d do anything to get something to hold over Wilbur, huh,” Ranboo comments. Techno nods.

“Well of course. He needs to be taken down a few notches.”

“Here, here!” Tommy cheers.

Techno’s grin grows just a little bit, before he cocks his head a little, thinking. “Y’know what, I’m callin’ him right now, actually.” Pulling out his phone, Techno does just that.

It only rings once before Wilbur picks up. “Hey, Wilbur, guess what?” Techno asks without preamble, interrupting whatever greeting Wilbur was in the middle of. He holds out his phone towards Ranboo, raising his eyebrows. Ranboo disguises his snickers behind coughs.

Wilbur’s in the middle of asking confusedly, “Techno, what-” Ranboo cuts him off, wincing and apologizing mentally to Wilbur.

“Hi, Wilbur.” There’s a silence. Ranboo shares a look with Tubbo and Tommy, and struggles to hold back his rising laughter.

Finally: “Technoblade.” Wilbur’s voice is tightly controlled. “Are you calling me to lord it over my head that you get to meet Ranboo before me?”

Techno takes a second, pretending to think. “Yup, I am,” he responds easily. His eyes twinkle a little in amusement. He’s much more expressive in person, Ranboo realizes. His humor’s just as dry, and it’s not like Ranboo hasn’t learned to tell over the course of their many calls Techno’s little vocal tells, but it’s nice learning this about him, too.

Wilbur’s only response is to hang up. Ranboo’s wheezes finally break free, joining Tommy and Tubbo’s cackles and Techno’s more controlled chuckles. “Now that that’s done with,” Techno says conversationally, placing his hands in his pockets, “Where to?”

-

In the end, after much debate, they end up just going back to Ranboo’s house. They go to get food first, which is an ordeal in and of itself – Tubbo asked for Taco Bell; Tommy demanded anything but that just to piss Tubbo off. Ranboo wanted McDonald’s, Techno was craving Panera.

They ended up getting Panera. Seems Techno’s incredibly good at debates- his attempted English major at work, Ranboo’s sure.

After they go back to Ranboo’s, they sit around the table and just...talk, for what feels like hours. Techno slowly relaxes – he hadn’t had many signs of nervousness when they’d first met up, but Ranboo’s glad the little signs of anxiety have slowly made their way out of his system. He’s glad his friends are comfortable around him.

“So you’re tellin’ me,” Techno says, “That you just- decided to fly down? And your parents let you?”

Tommy shrugs, grinning crookedly. “What can I say, I’m incredibly persuasive,” he says. Tubbo gives him a side-eyed look.

“You begged on your knees. It took you hours to convince them,” he says dryly. Techno snorts.

“Yeah, that sounds about right,” he says in amusement. Tommy gapes at him.

“*Hey!* What’s *that* supposed to mean?!” Techno just stares at him.

“Whatever you want it to mean,” he states.

“Not helpful!”

Techno shrugs. “I’m not known for bein’ helpful, Tommy,” he says. “That’s not really- not really my *thing*, if you get what I’m sayin’.” Tommy grumbles mulishly, laying his head on the table. Ranboo pats him on the head.

Tommy narrows his eyes in a glare at Ranboo. He honestly just looks like a grumpy cat. “Do *not*,” Tommy says slowly, “Patronize me.”

Ranboo just shrugs, giving Tommy an innocent grin. “I’m doing no such thing,” he says innocently.

“Fuck you,” Tommy mutters, before there’s a loud *thunk* and Tommy lets out a yelp.

“...Did you just try to kick me and accidentally kick the table leg?” Ranboo asks incredulously. Tommy hides his face in his arms.

“...No,” he mumbles moments later. Ranboo laughs gleefully.

“You *did!*”

“I did *not!*”

“Signs point to you doin’ it, Tommy.”

“Shut *up*, Techno!”

-

That night, for some reason, Ranboo can’t sleep. He doesn’t know why – they were all thoroughly exhausted by Techno kicking all of their asses in Skywars and the following movie marathon. It’s five in the morning; Ranboo honestly has *no* clue why he’s awake.

Giving up on sleeping for the time being, Ranboo slips out from underneath the covers, carefully adjusting Tommy’s arm so that it’s slung around Tubbo instead of himself. Tommy just mumbles a bit in his sleep and latches onto Tubbo’s sleeve. Tubbo reaches back and scoots closer to Tommy. Ranboo has no doubt that within minutes, they’ll be tangled up in each other.

Ranboo gets caught up in watching them for a moment, heart horribly, horribly fond.

He slowly makes his way downstairs, yawning. Ender, why *can’t* he sleep? He’s certainly tired enough to. Walking into the living room, he makes to collapse onto the couch. He blinks, though, when he can just barely make out someone sitting on the couch.

“...Techno?” he asks. He edges closer, waiting for his eyes to adjust to the darkness. The vaguely human-looking shape turns, and- yup, that’s Techno.

“Hullo, Ranboo,” Techno greets. He scooches over slightly on the couch; Ranboo gratefully takes the invitation and collapses down on the couch. “What’re you doin’ awake?” He asks.

Ranboo shrugs a bit, slumping back. “Can’t sleep. Dunno why.” As if to punctuate his statement, he yawns right at that moment. Techno eyes him for a moment. Ranboo’s too tired to try to figure out why.

“...Want me to read you somethin’?” Techno asks. Ranboo looks towards him in surprise.

“Read me something?” Ranboo echoes. Techno shrugs, eyes not quite looking at Ranboo.

“Y’know, like- somethin’ from mythology, or anythin’ like that.” Techno pauses for a moment, before he continues, a little quieter, “I’ve done it with Tommy a few times, and also Tubbo once or twice, when they couldn’t sleep.” Techno shrugs again. “I thought it might help.”

Something soft settles in Ranboo’s heart. All those people who think Techno doesn’t care are wrong; he cares a ridiculous amount. Ender. “Yeah, sure,” Ranboo finally agrees. He leans back against the couch, peering tiredly at Techno.

Techno doesn’t say anything, but there’s a pleased air about him regardless. He edges just a little closer to Ranboo and starts speaking. It’s low and soothing, and almost against his will, Ranboo’s eyes flutter closed.

It doesn’t take long for the weight of sleepiness to increase tenfold. Ranboo just barely feels himself tipping over; he eventually rests on what he knows has to be Techno’s shoulder. He can’t help but expect to be shaken off or adjusted – he knows Techno isn’t always one for physical contact – but instead he just remains there. Techno continues reading.

He’s asleep before he knows it.

When Ranboo wakes up a couple hours later, somehow, Tubbo’s curled into his other side and Tommy’s sprawled across the rest of the couch, head resting in Techno’s lap. *Huh*, Ranboo thinks groggily, before he drifts back to sleep.

-

Techno has to leave too soon. He only planned on staying for a couple of days – he has other commitments, apparently. Ranboo unashamedly clings onto Techno for probably far too long right before he leaves, but Techno indulges him, wrapping his arms securely around his back.

“I’ll see you again, okay?” He whispers into Ranboo’s hair. “So don’t go disappearin’ on me.”

Ranboo nods into Techno’s chest. “I won’t,” he promises. His finger absently fiddles with the ring settled on his finger; feels for the allium petal he’d threaded a string through and hung around his neck.

“Good.” Techno leans back, giving Ranboo one last small grin before he turns away. “Alright, c’mere, Theseus.” Tommy barrels into him, pressing himself tightly against his chest.

“I’ll miss you,” Ranboo just barely hears Tommy whisper. Techno laughs softly, running his fingers through Tommy’s hair. Predictably, it makes Tommy melt against Techno even more.

Techno reassures, “I’ll see you again, alright? This isn’t the end.”

“I know *that*,” Tommy grumbles. He leans back and Ranboo pretends he doesn’t notice how he swipes at his eyes. Tubbo rushes in to replace Tommy, wrapping his arms around Techno’s

waist. He doesn't say anything. Techno just pulls him close, closing his eyes and resting his chin on Tubbo's head.

Something clenches in Ranboo's heart. He turns away, sharing a teary smile with Tommy.

Finally, they have to let Techno go. "Take care of yourselves, alright?" Techno tells them, nodding in satisfaction when they all chorus agreements. "Gotta have my favorite verbal punching bags," Techno teases. Ranboo politely ignores the way his teasing smile wobbles slightly.

Tommy laughs shakily, swiping at his tears again. "See you later, Techno."

"Cya." Techno turns away, waving over his shoulder. All three of them shout farewells after him. When the door shuts, they're all silent for the longest time.

Tubbo turns towards them, eyes shiny. "Movie marathon time?" He suggests. Ranboo laughs wetly, swiping at his own tears.

"Yeah, sounds good," he agrees.

-

The night after Techno leaves, Tommy wakes up to the sound of someone whimpering.

Instantly, he's alert. He sits up slowly, glancing down towards his best friends. Tubbo seems alright, arms wrapped around Ranboo's own and face pressed into the mattress. Tommy notes with amusement that he's drooling.

Ranboo, on the other hand, is far too stiff. His face is scrunched up, and when Tommy looks closer, his cheeks look wet. Tommy bites his lip in worry, and reaches out to gently shake Ranboo's un-Tubbo'd shoulder. "Hey, Ranboo," he whispers loudly. "Ran, wake up."

Face scrunching up further, Ranboo lets out another heartbreaking sound. Tommy shakes harder, determined to get Ranboo out of whatever nightmare is haunting him. "Ranboo, c'mon," Tommy tries again, louder. At this point, Tubbo's woken up, blinking groggily at him.

"Wha's wron'?" He asks in a mumble. Tommy jerks his head towards Ranboo.

"Nightmare," he explains shortly. Tubbo's eyes sharpen slightly, and he brings up one hand to pat Ranboo's cheek.

"Boo, wake up," he says. "Come on." They both shake Ranboo's shoulders, and, finally-

Ranboo gasps, eyes shooting open. His eyes look around wildly, before they finally seem to land on Tommy and Tubbo. Ranboo visibly relaxes at the sight of them, but he's still tense. Tommy moves his hand so that instead of gripping Ranboo's shoulder, it's holding Ranboo's hand, instead. When he laces their fingers together, Ranboo squeezes his hand.

“Hey there, Ran,” Tommy whispers. “You alright?” Ranboo takes in a deep breath, letting it out slowly. Tommy exaggerates his own breathing to give Ranboo more of a guide. Ranboo’s eyes lock on his chest, and gradually, Ranboo’s breathing evens out more and loses its shakiness.

“...I’m better now,” Ranboo finally answers. Tubbo adjusts so that he’s half-behind Ranboo, his head resting against Tubbo’s chest. He brushes back Ranboo’s hair, playing with the strands. Tubbo massages gently at Ranboo’s scalp, and Ranboo seems to sink back into it.

“You wanna talk about it, Boo?” Tubbo asks in a whisper.

Ranboo bites his lip, his eyes fluttering shut again. “...It’s stupid,” he finally murmurs. Tommy shakes his head.

“Don’t give a shit,” he responds immediately. He softens his tone, and says, “If it scared you, it’s not stupid. Tell us if you think it’d help.”

Ranboo just breathes for a moment longer. Tommy plays absently with his hand, giving Ranboo all the time he needs. Eventually, Ranboo starts, “It’s a recurring one. About, uh, before.”

Tubbo makes an encouraging sound, and Ranboo continues, “I just...dream about doing those horrible things. About hurting people. Michael.” Ranboo cracks his eyes open to meet Tommy’s. “You guys. And- I *know* we’re not in that world anymore, and I know what you’ve told me, but...”

“You’re still afraid,” Tommy finishes. Ranboo nods miserably, eyes slipping back shut.

“Yeah,” he admits in a whisper. Tommy’s heart clenches, and he bites his lip, meeting Tubbo’s eyes for a brief second and debating what to say.

Tubbo says softly, “I still get nightmares about the festival, sometimes.” Tommy’s eyes shoot towards Tubbo, and Tubbo gives him a wry smile. “It scares me,” he admits. “Sometimes, it still feels like I’m still there.”

“Exile, too,” Tommy adds on quietly. “Or the Prison. Sometimes, I could swear I can still hear Dream, taunting me.” Tommy shudders, laughing humorlessly. “It really fuckin’ sucks.”

Ranboo sucks in a breath, eyes opening back up. He looks achingly sympathetic. “I’m...I’m sorry, guys,” he whispers. Tommy shakes his head.

“Nothing you can do about it, big man,” Tommy tells him. “It’s just- it just means we went through some really shitty stuff. And we can’t really change that.”

“It’s not stupid that you’re still afraid,” Tubbo reassures. “I am. Tommy is.” Tubbo pauses for a moment, and then adds on slowly, “I guess what matters is that when we wake up, we know there’s nothing to be afraid of here.”

Tommy nods slowly. “Yeah,” he whispers. “When- when I wake up like this, I try to think about the fact that we’re- we’re not there anymore. I try to remember that I have friends here.

Dream. Phil. Techno. Wilbur.” He cracks a small grin at Ranboo and Tubbo. “You guys.”

“You’re a sap,” Tubbo informs him, a slight flush to his cheeks. Ranboo laughs a bit, and Tommy’s gratified to see his lips perking up into the smallest of smiles. “But, yeah. I…” Tubbo trails off. “I just have to remember that here, we don’t *have* to be afraid anymore.”

“We’re safe here,” Ranboo murmurs. Tubbo and Tommy both nod.

“We sure are, Big Man,” Tommy responds, smile growing the tiniest bit. “Everyone here would go to bat for us. The biggest danger is, like, getting run over or something.”

“Please don’t manifest that,” Ranboo mutters. Tommy laughs and obligingly knocks on their wood bedside table. hilariously, Ranboo relaxes back a bit as he does that. Ranboo opens his eyes again, squeezing Tommy’s hand and glancing up at Tubbo. “Thanks, guys,” he murmurs. “This…this helped.”

“Good,” Tommy whispers. Just to reaffirm the message a little bit more, Tommy adds on, “We’re here. Tubbo’s here. I’m here. We’re all safe. You’re not going to hurt us; nothing was ever your fault.” Tommy leans forward, and promises, “We’re safe.”

Ranboo squeezes his eyes shut, a couple of tears trailing down his cheeks. Tubbo lets out a distressed noise and wipes them away. It’s still their habit, even though crying doesn’t burn Ranboo anymore. “We’re safe,” Ranboo repeats, all choked up.

“We’re safe,” Tubbo parrots, a small smile tugging at his lips. Tommy sits back on his knees, and gives Ranboo a moment to collect himself. Finally, Ranboo snuffles, and wipes the last of his tears away. “You alright now, Boo?” Tubbo confirms. This time, Ranboo nods instantly.

“Yeah,” he whispers. “Yeah, I’m good.”

Tubbo nods. “Good, because I’m fucking tired.” Tommy laughs, and Ranboo chuckles a bit. He looks exhausted. Tommy doesn’t envy him.

“Let’s go back to sleep,” Tommy prompts. He turns over and plops onto his back, shifting until his head is resting on Ranboo’s chest. Tubbo grunts a little at the extra weight, but Tommy doesn’t pay any mind to it. Tubbo can handle it.

Ranboo tangles a hand in Tommy’s hair, and Tommy can’t help but let out a little sigh. Both Ranboo and Tubbo snicker a bit. “G’night again, guys,” Ranboo murmurs. Tommy mumbles something, and he’s asleep before he can hear Tubbo’s response.

-

Tommy and Tubbo’s visit starts creeping towards its end much too quickly.

Two weeks. That’s what their parents had told them. Two weeks, they can come to America, but then they have to be back. Tommy because of college, and Tubbo, well, because his parents don’t want him alone in a foreign country for longer than that. Which is fair, but also it sucks *major* ass.

Their third-to-last day here, it starts really sinking in that they have to leave soon. Tommy starts laughing a little less brightly, Tubbo clings to Ranboo as much as he can. Ranboo doesn't let them out of his sight almost at all. None of them stream much, really- not that they'd done much of that in the first place.

The one stream they do is, ironically, the one where Tommy breaks out of prison. Tommy, hilariously, gets to use Ranboo's set-up since he's the one streaming, while Tubbo and Ranboo use their shitty laptops. Tommy plays up the whole act; Tubbo winces a couple of times, but after this long he knows how to tell when Tommy's really scared. He's not at all during this stream. It's relieving, to see how Tommy's healed.

As much as some of the SMP has sucked major ass, Tubbo has to admit that this isn't the worst way they could've used to get over their trauma. Especially since Dream knows, now, he seems to lighten up on the acting. He's still acting like a bitch, but he doesn't press as hard. Tubbo's glad.

Seems telling Dream was the right choice, after all.

Tubbo and Ranboo, while waiting for Tommy to exit the prison, just mess around in Snowchester. They play around with Michael a bit and visit the mansion- and man, if it isn't fun recreating these events from their past life. It's not the same as having Michael and their home back, of course, but, well. Tubbo's home has always been with Tommy and later Ranboo. He misses some of it, but in the end, it's a fond memory from the past. He's making plenty of new ones now, even if he misses Michael so much that it *aches* sometimes.

Finally, Tommy breaks out of prison, and Tubbo finds great joy in just stalking him around and not talking to him. He acts like he's checking out Ranboo, which makes Tommy yell in annoyance and Ranboo shoot him an exasperated look from across the room, but Tubbo can't bring himself to care. He's gonna soak up this pure joy for as long as he can.

He's got to admit, though, when Tommy asked if he was happy with Ranboo when he "found out" that he and Tubbo were married, he does choke up a bit. Tommy's got that ridiculously fond, ridiculously caring tone to his voice, and Tubbo can suddenly *see* the way Tommy's face had gone all soft and loving, the first time round. "Yeah," he answers, and tries to hide the way he's tearing up.

Tommy responds instantly, "Then okay." Tubbo forces himself to swallow back the sudden wave of gratitude he's feeling.

The rest of the stream is just fun – Tommy plays up the jealous bit again after that small moment of softness, and they just goof around together. It's fun. Tubbo wouldn't trade them for the world.

Afterwards, when Tommy's ended stream, Tubbo stalks into the room and wraps Tommy in a hug. Tommy startles a bit, but wraps his arms around Tubbo in turn. Tubbo doesn't say anything, just burying his head in Tommy's shoulder. Tubbo gets the feeling Tommy understands, anyway.

He squeezes Tommy, then draws back, giving Tommy a smile. Tommy just grins back. There's a little huff of breath from behind Tubbo, and he glances over to see Ranboo standing in the doorway. He's leaning against the door jam, arms crossed and looking entirely too affectionate. Ender- Tubbo doesn't want this to end. He *really* doesn't want this to end.

Silently, he walks over to Ranboo and burrows into his chest. Something heavy settles in Tubbo's heart. It's suddenly hard not to cry. Tommy comes around and presses himself against Tubbo's back, hugging them both. Ranboo silently holds them.

They stay like that for a long, long while.

-

That night, Ranboo falls asleep first.

They'd gotten in bed early to watch some videos in Ranboo's room. They'd gotten through rewatching the entirety of Techno's potato war, and were just getting started on Wilbur's old videos when Ranboo'd fallen asleep, slumped over and head resting in Tubbo's lap. Tubbo scratches lightly against his scalp, heart aching.

"I don't wanna leave," he whispers, low and trembling. He blinks back the sudden wetness at the corners of his eyes.

Tommy sighs a bit, reaching over to grab Tubbo's hand. "I know," he responds. "I don't wanna leave, either." They're both silent, for a moment, before Tommy begins in a whisper, "What if-" Tommy swallows. "I'm scared that he'll...he'll forget." *Forget how much we love him*, Tommy leaves unsaid. Tubbo hears it loud and clear.

Carefully, Tubbo reaches for his husband's hand and takes it, playing with the ring on it and fidgeting with his own. "I am too," Tubbo admits quietly. He knows – or at least he *hopes* – that it's unlikely. They've told Ranboo time and time and time again how much they adore him, and he seems more and more assured in himself each day. But...they can't do *anything* when they go back if Ranboo disappears again, bar coming back to the US.

Which they *would* do, don't get him wrong, but he'd rather Ranboo not go through that heartache again.

Tommy goes quiet for a bit. "We'll just have to remind him," he decides. "We- we'll tell him, all the time, and make sure he knows." Tubbo nods slowly, an idea knocking at the back of his mind.

"Yes- Tommy, yes, but how about we also..." Tubbo leans forward, just on the off-chance Ranboo's half-awake and just not showing it, and whispers his idea in Tommy's ear.

Tommy's ear-to-ear grin when Tubbo leans back again lets Tubbo know his idea is a good one.

They fall into another comfortable silence, before Tommy lets out a breath. Tubbo eyes him questioningly. "Tommy?" He asks quietly. Ranboo mutters a bit in his sleep; Tommy glances

down and runs his fingers through his hair, and Ranboo settles down.

“You...” Tommy trails off, closing his eyes and taking in a breath, as if steeling himself. “What did you mean, when- when Ranboo said that he wasn’t...enough, the other day?” Tommy asks, finally meeting Tubbo’s eyes. Tubbo winces. A familiar pang shoots through his heart- he still really, *really* doesn’t like thinking about those four months after Tommy-after.

Tubbo reaches over and places a hand on Tommy’s wrist, squeezing gently. Tommy automatically adjusts so their fingers can weave together. “After...after you were gone,” Tubbo starts hesitantly. The words are uncomfortable in his mouth. Tommy’s face remains calm, but Tubbo knows him too well at this point to miss the distressed tightening in his forehead. “It was...hard. I-” Tubbo’s voice chokes off, a knot forming in his throat.

Even after almost twenty years at this point, it- it hurts.

Tubbo forces himself to continue anyway, saying, “I was lost without you. I- Ranboo did almost everything.” Tommy takes in a shaky breath. Tubbo squeezes his hand, guilt piling in his gut. “But eventually I was careless, and...” Tubbo shrugs. Something shatters in Tommy’s eyes, then, and it’s no surprise when Tommy reaches out to bring Tubbo into a hug. Tubbo goes willingly, soaking up the comfort Tommy’s providing.

“I missed you,” Tubbo whispers, shoving his face into Tommy’s chest to hide his tears. Tommy rubs circles into Tubbo’s back and pulls him closer. “I- I missed you so *much*, ” Tubbo repeats, voice breaking.

Tommy’s silent for a moment, just holding Tubbo. “I’m sorry,” he finally murmurs. His chin rests in Tubbo’s hair and Tubbo can feel his chin move as he talks. “I’m sorry for leaving you two like that.”

“Don’t be sorry,” comes Ranboo’s scoff. Arms come around Tubbo’s back, and both of them are pulled against Ranboo’s chest. “You saved us,” Ranboo says, quieter. “Don’t be sorry for that. And you,” Tubbo barely stops himself from startling when Ranboo’s hand drops down on his head, playing with the strands. “Don’t blame yourself for how you grieved, alright?” His voice is painfully soft, and Tubbo can’t help but wince. Of course, Ranboo noticed where his thoughts were going.

Tommy sighs, and says, “We’re together now. That’s what matters.” Tubbo snuffles and nods, and Ranboo lets out an approving noise.

“That’s what matters,” Ranboo repeats.

And there they stay, wrapped up in each other, warm.

-

The last day that Tubbo and Tommy are here, neither of them leave Ranboo’s side.

Ranboo's not complaining. He- honestly, he doesn't want to let them go, either. He's been dreading them leaving for the past week or so, but especially the last few days, it's really sunk in. Based on the clinginess of his best friends over that course of time, Ranboo knows they feel the same way.

They don't leave the house. They're mostly packed already, and so they just hang out in Ranboo's living room. They play UNO again, but their hearts aren't really in it. Eventually, it just devolves into them slumped up against each other on the floor, leaning against the couch, and just...being with each other.

Small conversations happen, about little, mundane things, but silence falls between them before long. Something's choking at Ranboo's heart- ender, he's gonna *miss* them.

Ranboo voices the thought, saying quietly, "I'm going to miss you guys." Tubbo snuffles and snuggles a bit closer. Tommy glares up at him. His gaze is teary.

"Don't fuckin' *say* that- I'm gonna cry," Tommy complains. He threads his fingers through Ranboo's and squeezes tightly. "You sure you can't just come home with us?" Tommy pleads.

Tears prick at the backs of Ranboo's eyes. He closes them and shakes his head. "I have to finish school," he explains helplessly. "I already skipped two weeks to be with you guys. I can't miss any more." Tommy visibly *slumps*, and Ranboo detangles their hands and wraps an arm around Tommy's shoulders, pulling him tightly against him. "I want to," Ranboo voices quietly. "*Ender*, I want to."

Tommy buries his head in Ranboo's shoulder. He doesn't say anything more. Ranboo lets a few tears trail down his cheeks, and presses a quick kiss to both of their hair. He doesn't comment on the choked sob each of them lets out.

After another while, Tommy silently dislodges himself. "Gonna go make sure we have everything packed," he mutters, dragging himself upstairs. He looks so *sad*- and for a moment, all Ranboo can do is feel horribly, uncontrollably guilty.

Tubbo sits up, distracting him from his misery. "We're gonna call when we get back," Tubbo tells him fiercely, turning to meet his eyes. "And we're gonna call every second you're not at school or asleep. You're gonna be *sick* of us."

Ranboo lets out a wet laugh, pressing his forehead to Tubbo's. "Impossible," he whispers. "I'll look forward to it." Tubbo sighs a little, and presses back against Ranboo. They just stay there, forehead to forehead, for longer than Ranboo can track.

Finally, Tommy comes back downstairs, carting their luggage behind him. "Tubs," he calls, voice still pitched low. Dejected. "We...we need to get going." Tubbo takes in a shuddering breath, but when Ranboo stands and offers a hand to help Tubbo up with, he takes it.

Tommy grabs him first, standing up on his tip-toes to press his forehead to Ranboo's. "Okay, Ranboob, listen to me," Tommy whispers fiercely. "Don't you ever- and I mean *ever*- dare forget how much we love you again, alright?" Ranboo lets out a choked laugh.

“I won’t,” he promises. “I won’t.”

Tommy tips his head back just enough so that he can meet Ranboo’s eyes. He nods in satisfaction. “Good, because we *will* fly back down here to knock some sense into you.” Tommy leans back and presses a solid kiss to Ranboo’s forehead. Ranboo lets out a laughing sob as Tommy wraps his arms around Ranboo’s chest and hugs him tight. Ranboo pulls him close, and Tommy whispers, “I love you, Ran. So, *so* fucking much.”

Ranboo leans his chin on Tommy’s head and lays his own kiss on his hair. “I love you too, Toms.” Tommy snuffles, and clings on tighter.

Tommy lets go first, giving Ranboo a teary smile. Tubbo capitalizes, and burrows into Ranboo’s chest as soon as Tommy’s any distance away from Ranboo. “You’re not allowed to disappear again, okay, Boo?” Tubbo mutters into Ranboo’s chest. Ranboo threads one hand through Tubbo’s hair, bringing him as tight to him as possible.

“I know,” Ranboo promises again. “I won’t.”

“Good, ‘cause I’ll murder you if you do,” Tubbo tells him. Ranboo sobs a bit more. Tubbo just...clings onto him. Ranboo doesn’t want to let go, he *really* doesn’t want to, but he knows their flight is in less than a couple of hours and they *really* need to go.

Ranboo, regretfully, is the first to let go. “Hey,” he murmurs, pressing a kiss to Tubbo’s forehead. Tubbo leans into it, eyes fluttering shut, and lets out a breathy sob. Ranboo leans back, and taps Tubbo’s chin so that he’s looking into Ranboo’s eyes. “I’ll see you again, alright?” He glances up towards Tommy, who’s full-out crying, now. “Both of you.”

Tommy nods and bows his head, scrubbing at his eyes, while Tubbo just lets out another choked sound. Ranboo can’t help it, and drags Tubbo into another hug, waving Tommy over as well. “I love you both,” he murmurs, once they’re nestled against his chest. “You’re my best friends. My soulmates. I love you so, so much.”

They both just cling to him tighter.

Eventually, eventually, they have to let go. Tommy lets go first, tapping Tubbo’s shoulder. “Time to go, Tubs,” he whispers. Tubbo nods reluctantly, leaning back and scrubbing at his eyes once again. They grab their bags; the taxi arrives right at that moment. Ranboo helps them load their stuff into the car.

He pulls them in for one brief hug, letting them go just as quickly. “Travel safe,” he says. He backs up slowly towards the house, *refusing* to break down sobbing until he’s inside and alone. “I love you!”

“Love you, Boo!” Tubbo calls tearfully, before the door closes behind him. Tommy peaks his head out from the other side as the car starts moving.

“Love you, Ran!” He shouts. Ranboo just lets out a hitched laugh, tears streaming down his cheeks, and just waves them goodbye. No, not goodbye. See you later.

Goodbyes are forever. This is *not* forever.

Ranboo slowly trudges his way up the stairs. His shoulders feel weighted down, suddenly- the house feels so *empty*. He doesn't know how he's supposed to go to school tomorrow if he feels like this. He comes to his room, and braces himself, staring at the closed door.

It's only been two weeks, but Ranboo's best friends are already so integral to every aspect of his life. He has no doubt his room's going to feel barren without them taking up every square inch of his bed.

Silently, he pushes the door open.

Instantly, his breath catches in his throat.

The first thing he notices are the alliums. Tens of them, just- splayed all over the room, tucked into nooks and crannies and taped all over the walls. And, speaking of the walls-

They're all utterly *covered* in paper. Ranboo moves into the room in a haze, reaching out and tugging what he discovers to be a post-it from the wall. *don't forget to eat!* the note says, not signed with anything but a little drawing of a bee and a heart.

Ranboo's *going* to start crying again.

All of the notes- they're different. They're all unique, with little reminders for Ranboo to take care of himself. And, they all have little signs of Tommy and Tubbo's love on them, a heart or a flower or a smiley face or *something*.

At least fifty of them – and there must be *hundreds* plastered everywhere, it'll take ages for Ranboo to just read them all – just say *we love you!* <3 on them. Ranboo sees it, again and again, and reads through them until his tears are blurring his vision too much.

you guys are saps, Ranboo sends them, tears streaming down his cheeks. *i love you. so, so much.*

:D is all that Tubbo sends back. Tommy responds with *love you too, dumbass* and somehow Ranboo can hear the fondness laced throughout the words.

Ranboo had been afraid of falling asleep. Of feeling lonely, of feeling unloved despite the countless times he's been told differently over the past weeks. But, now, Ranboo can't feel a single ounce of that fear. He's loved. He's loved.

He's loved.

thank you all so much for reading and for going along with me on this journey <333
we're hitting the home stretch now :')

steadiness

Chapter Summary

Ranboo's streaming when his headphones ping. "Ranboo!" Tubbo's voice calls. A tension Ranboo didn't even realize was wound in his shoulders relaxes, and his smile grows a little more real.

"Hi, Tubbo," Ranboo greets.

"I missed you!" Tubbo chirps. Ranboo glances at the time- jeez, Tubbo must've literally called Ranboo as soon as he got home from the airport. They only landed a little while ago. Ranboo laughs a little, moving his character forward.

Ranboo responds, "I missed you too, Tubbo."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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Ranboo responds, "I missed you too, Tubbo." And he has – it's only been about 12 hours, maybe a little more, but he'd felt Tubbo's (and Tommy's) absences like a hole in his heart. He knew they'd really made themselves part of Ranboo's everyday life when they came over, but he still wasn't prepared.

The notes and flowers they'd left in his room had helped, though.

"What're you doing?" Tubbo asks, bringing Ranboo out of his thoughts.

Ranboo answers absently, "Just hanging out on the SMP." At that very moment, he falls into lava. "Whoops, there I go," he states, completely unconcerned. Tubbo snorts.

"What'd you do?"

"Fell into lava."

Tubbo laughs. “Rip,” he says. Ranboo sighs.

“Thank you, Tubbo, thank you.” Tubbo still sounds a little dejected, and Ranboo can’t blame him – he’s been down since they left, too. But just talking to Tubbo is making Ranboo feel better. He hopes it’s the same for Tubbo. Ranboo glances at the clock again, and- oh. Wait. “Tubbo, shouldn’t you go to sleep?” Ranboo asks, raising his eyebrows. “It’s three in the morning.”

Tubbo lets out a little whine. Ranboo stifles a snicker – Tubbo isn’t normally *this* honest about his feelings on-stream. He must be tired. “I wanna talk to you, though,” he complains. Ranboo shakes his head.

“I won’t stop you, I guess,” Ranboo says. He glances at chat – predictably, they’re well-entertained by the conversation – and then continues on with what he was doing. Tubbo hangs out with him until Ranboo ends a good two hours later. His little interjections ebb off towards the end; Ranboo wouldn’t be surprised if he’d ended up falling asleep.

Finally, he ends stream. He tabs over to discord, and asks softly, “Hey, Tubbo, you awake?”

It’s quiet for a moment. “...yeah,” Tubbo mumbles, barely audible. Ranboo lets out a laugh, resting his chin in his hand and looking at the screen fondly.

“You should go to sleep,” Ranboo tells Tubbo. Tubbo whines yet again.

“I don’t wanna,” Tubbo says petulantly. Ranboo rolls his eyes.

“Tubbo, you’re practically asleep right now.” Ranboo lets his tone soften and says, “Go to sleep, Tubbo. I’ll stay here.”

Tubbo’s silent for a moment. Finally, he mutters, “Okay. G’night, Boo. Love you.”

Ranboo’s lips quirk up a bit. “Love you too, Bee.” Tubbo falls asleep. Ranboo stays on call for the rest of the night with him.

It’s not the same, but it’s nice.

-

Ranboo’s just woken up when he gets a facetime call.

He’s still groggy, rubbing at his eyes as he answers the call. He doesn’t even read who it is, but really, there’s only going to be two people possibly facetimeing him out of the blue. Tommy’s face loads up within a few seconds, grainy and low-quality, but his smile is as bright as ever. “Ranboo!” He shouts. The picture wobbles a bit. “How are you, my friend?”

“I just woke up,” Ranboo says dryly, falling back into bed. “What’re you doing?”

“We’re fuckin’ vlogging, bitch!” Tommy says, panning the camera around in a circle as if to show off what he’s doing. Ranboo processes exactly none of it. “Wil- Wilbur, say hi!”

Ranboo adverts his eyes briefly as the image spins wildly. Tommy must have thrown his phone. He looks back in a few seconds, and thankfully the image has stabilized. “Good morning, Ranboo,” Wilbur greets, smile tinged with amusement. “Having a good morning so far?”

Groaning a bit, Ranboo rubs at his eyes tiredly. “Just amazing,” Ranboo says. Wilbur laughs a bit, throwing his head back. “What’re you guys up to?”

“Tommy came down to Brighton,” Wilbur explains. He lists off, “Tubbo’s gonna be down later today, and we’re gonna go hang out with Phil for a while. It’ll be fun.”

Ranboo ignores the ache in his heart, and tries his best to give a genuine smile. “That does sound fun,” he says. He means it, but it doesn’t stop him from *aching* to be there, too. Wilbur seems to notice, his smile shrinking a bit and eyes flashing with sympathy.

“When you come over,” Wilbur says casually, as if it’s guaranteed to happen. Ranboo’s smile grows a little bit more real. “We’ll show you everything. You’ll be sick of us within a week.”

“Oh, boy,” Ranboo says dramatically, but he’s grinning. He doesn’t think he could get sick of everyone if he tried. Suddenly, Wilbur’s image jerks, and Tommy’s face is filling the screen again.

“Wilbur, stop hogging my best friend!” Tommy shouts.

“You literally gave me the phone-”

“Mimimimi, I can’t *hear* you!” Tommy shakes his head, returning his attention to Ranboo. “The nerve, am I right?” Tommy says dramatically.

Ranboo laughs. “He did have a point,” Ranboo tells Tommy. Tommy glares at him.

“Don’t you dare betray me like this, Ranboob. You won’t like the results.”

Snorting, Ranboo responds, “What would you even do to me?”

“So much fucked-up shit, Ranboo, you don’t even *know*.” Ranboo just laughs.

“Okay, Tommy.” Ranboo shifts a little in bed, and asks, “What’d you call me for, Tommy?”

Tommy shrugs. “Just wanted to talk to you,” Tommy says, as if that’s all he needs to interrupt a whole vlog for a facetime call. Ranboo’s grin softens.

“Yeah?” He asks.

“Yeah.” Tommy gnaws on his lip, and admits, “I miss you, Ran.”

Ranboo closes his eyes briefly, Tommy’s statement like a knife to the heart. “I miss you too, Toms.” There’s a silence between them for a moment – what’s Ranboo supposed to say? He can’t do anything, except miss them like they’re missing limbs. Which they might as well be, honestly.

“You wanna hang out with us today?” Tommy asks suddenly. Ranboo raises his eyebrows.

“What do you mean?”

“Like- when we can, I’ll call you, so you can be with us, too.” Fondness wells in Ranboo’s heart, but he shakes his head.

He says gently, “Tommy, I can’t always be on the phone when you do stuff.” Tommy’s face drops the slightest bit, and Ranboo says soothingly, “I’m fine, I promise. Go have fun with them, alright?”

“Okay,” Tommy says sullenly. “Talk to you later, Ran.”

Ranboo gives Tommy the most reassuring smile he can. “See you, Tommy. Have fun.”

With that, the facetime call ends. Ranboo places his phone to the side, and rolls over. Ender, he misses his friends a ridiculous amount, but...the way they always try to include him makes him feel ridiculously warm.

And if he enjoys the photos and videos Tommy sends him through the day and *yearns*, well, no one can blame him.

-

“Tommy- Tommy, get *off*!”

Tommy laughs, decidedly not getting off of Wilbur’s back. “I don’t think I will!” Tommy says cheerfully, laughing at the way Wilbur grumbles. He readjusts his arms and hoists Tommy up more securely, though, so Tommy just grins and hangs on tighter.

“You’re a horrible child,” Wilbur tells him. Tommy just grins wider.

“Onwards, my trusty steed!” Tommy demands, pointing his arm forwards.

Wilbur shoots him a dry look over his shoulder. “If you say that again, I’m dumping you on the ground,” he states. Tommy shakes his head.

“No, you simply won’t.”

“I will.”

“Nope! You love me too much.”

Wilbur raises an eyebrow. “I’d sell you to Satan for a single corn chip,” he deadpans. Tommy gasps in offense, but his grin only widens.

“How *dare* you! That’s so rude of you!”

Shaking his head, Wilbur just keeps on walking. He doesn’t deign Tommy worth a response. Tommy’ll take that as a win. “Anyways, where’re we going?”

“Back to my place,” Wilbur answers. He glances at Tommy over his shoulder. “What, you wanna go somewhere else? I know Phil and Tubbo went to Tesco’s to get food, but we can do something else if you want.”

“Nah,” Tommy says, resting his head on Wilbur’s shoulder. “Going back to your place sounds great.”

Wilbur doesn’t respond, just hiking Tommy up further. The walk back to Wilbur’s house is silent, but comfortable. Tommy can almost feel himself nodding off against Wilbur’s back, but forces himself to stay awake.

Finally, they arrive back. “Here, Toms,” Wilbur says softly, nudging Tommy’s head with his shoulder. “We’re back.”

Tommy blinks groggily, stumbling slightly when Wilbur puts him down on the ground. Man, he’s more tired than he thought. Wilbur eyes him out of the corner of his eyes. “Tired?” He asks, unlocking the door. Tommy shakes his head, blatantly lying.

“I’m fine,” he mumbles. Wilbur just gives him a look.

“Uh-huh,” he says doubtfully. Tommy glares at him dully.

“Are you calling me a liar?”

Wilbur replies in an instant, “Well I ain’t calling you a truther!” Tommy stares at him blankly. Wilbur sighs, rubbing the back of his head as if embarrassed. “Reference. Forget it.”

Tommy snorts. “Nerd,” he tells Wilbur.

“Child,” Wilbur shoots back. Tommy makes to retort – this sort of slander cannot stand – but Wilbur reaches over and pulls Tommy towards him before Tommy can speak. Silently, he tucks Tommy against him.

“Let’s go inside,” Wilbur says quietly, leading Tommy through the door. Tommy doesn’t say anything, but leans into Wilbur’s warmth and lets him lead the way. He’s so glad Wilbur’s finally gotten to the point of casual affection again – he’d missed this.

Wilbur guides him towards the couch, pushing him gently towards it. “Sit,” he tells Tommy. Tommy does so, collapsing down and lolling his head against the back of the couch. Shit, he’s *tired*.

Tommy dozes while Wilbur does whatever he’s doing. Tommy can’t be bothered to figure it out. It takes too long until Wilbur’s back in the room and sitting down by Tommy. Tommy gracelessly topples over, faceplanting into Wilbur’s thigh.

Wilbur laughs softly, brushing his fingers gently over Tommy’s hair. “Tired, huh,” he murmurs. Tommy grumbles a bit.

“Shut up, Wilby,” Tommy mumbles. It takes Wilbur’s carefully controlled exhale for Tommy to realize what he said. He flushes, cheeks burning.

He's- he's called Wilbur *Wilby* a few times, but it still makes him embarrassed each and every time. Wilbur's never commented on it other than the first time, but- one of the signs of the Wilbur from *before* losing it was him starting to dislike Tommy calling him that nickname. *Childish*, he'd called it. *Unfitting of a war commander*.

Tommy can't help but be relieved that this Wilbur doesn't seem to mind. It seems to be quite the opposite, actually, from the way Wilbur also blushes every time Tommy uses it.

Wilbur starts humming under his breath, and despite himself, Tommy's eyes start to drift closed. "Go to sleep, Toms," Wilbur murmurs, continuing his soft motions. He says nothing more, and just keeps on humming.

It's impossible for Tommy not to fall asleep like this.

-

When Tommy wakes up, he's been moved to a bed.

He cracks his eyes open slowly, blinking a few times to clear the fogginess away. The room's familiar – it's the guest room that Tommy always stays in when he stays over. Predictably, Tubbo's sprawled out next to him, snoring loudly. Tommy spares him one quick look, snorting at the pile of drool next to his face, before he crawls out of bed.

There's a sharpie lying innocently on the desk. Tommy swipes it and draws a penis on Tubbo's face before he leaves the room.

Tommy follows the faint singing, emerging into the kitchen quickly enough. Wilbur's back is to him; he's cooking something. It smells delicious. Tommy quietly pads over, shoving himself under Wilbur's arm without any further ado.

Wilbur jumps a bit, head jerking towards Tommy. Tommy's eyes are focused on the stove – it looks like he's making sausage. Yum. "Jesus, Tommy, you scared the shit out of me!" Wilbur exclaims. Regardless of his shock, he wraps his arm around Tommy's shoulder; Tommy leans into him.

"Sorry," Tommy says absently. Wilbur sighs, shaking his head and returning his attention to the stove.

"No you're not, you gremlin child." Tommy just flashes a grin up at him. Wilbur's tone loses its fake annoyance, and he asks, "Tubbo still sleeping?"

"Mhm."

Wilbur nods. "Well, let's be sure to keep it down, then." Tommy snorts. Tubbo, during the wars, was an incredibly light sleeper. Absolutely *anything* could wake him up. Now, it seems like it takes a concentrated war effort (or tickling him) for him to be dragged from the depths. It's nice, seeing him return to how he was before everything started going to shit.

"It'll take a fuckin' earthquake to wake him up," Tommy says dryly. "Trust me, he's not gonna wake up. Case in point: OI! TUBS!"

No response. Tommy waits five seconds, then beams up at Wilbur. “See?”

Wilbur just stares at him for a second, before he sighs and returns his attention to the stove. “You’re a menace,” he says mildly. Tommy just laughs.

“When’s it gonna be done?” He asks, just to be annoying.

“When it’s ready. Shut up.”

“But *when*?”

“In like, fifteen minutes. Now shut up.”

“That’s too far away.”

Needless to say, Tommy gets kicked out of Wilbur’s kitchen. He takes refuge in the living room, laughing. Phil’s there – he must’ve stayed the night on the couch – and greets Tommy with a warm smile. “Hey there, mate,” Phil says.

“Hi, Phil!” Tommy says brightly. He looks around for something to do, and his eyes catch on the piano. Quickly, he makes his way over and sits on the bench. He’s not as good as Tubbo is, but he does know quite a few songs. Of course, there’s only one song that he’d ever begin with while at Wilbur’s house.

He plays the first few chords to *Your New Boyfriend*, and Phil glances over. He looks fond. “Starting with that one, huh,” he asks. Tommy grins at him and nods.

“Course I am!” Tommy plays the last bit of the intro, and calls over, “You should sing along, Phil!”

Phil sighs, but in the end, he does. They belt the whole song – Wilbur, in the middle of it, yells, “You both are horrible!” – and at the end, they’re laughing. Phil wipes a tear from his eye, still chuckling. “Man, I didn’t realize how much more fun it is singing that song in person,” he says.

They hear Wilbur chuckle, and when they both turn around, Wilbur’s leaning against the door jam. “It is a lot more fun,” Wilbur states. He glances at Tommy for a moment, and his tone is affectionate when he says, “Tommy and I have sung many times in the car together. And Tubbo, of course.”

Tommy rolls his eyes exaggeratedly. “Tubbo always demands on being included when we sing stuff,” Tommy says, acting annoyed. “Clingy bitch.”

“You literally invite him every time,” Wilbur says dryly. Tommy shoots him a look.

“Did I ask for your opinion, Wilbur? No, I did not, so shut up.” Wilbur shakes his head.

He says, “Well, if you don’t want any food, feel free to continue insulting me. Otherwise, suck it up.”

Tommy jumps up. Wilbur laughs a bit, and when Phil stands up too, he reaches up to ruffle Tommy's hair. Tommy yelps, ducking down and protecting his head with his hands. "Stop!" Tommy whines. It just ends up earning him more laughter.

"Go ahead and wake up Tubbo, Toms," Wilbur tells him, going back into the kitchen. Tommy grins.

"With *pleasure*."

Without further ado, Tommy bolts into the guest room, and leaps onto the bed. "Time to wake up, bitch boy!" Tommy yells, landing on top of Tubbo. Predictably, Tubbo jerks awake immediately. His eyes are wide. Tommy laughs at him.

"Tommy, you're a *dickhead*," Tubbo tells him, holding a hand over his heart. "Fucking *shit*."

Tommy gives him an innocent grin, stifling laughter at the sight of the dick still prominent on his cheek. "C'mon, bee boy, let's get food!" He says.

Tubbo sighs exaggeratedly. "Fine." He takes too long getting out of bed, though, so Tommy grabs his hand.

"Come *on*!" He urges.

"Fuck off, I'm *coming*!"

-

"You drew a *dick* on my *face*?!"

Tommy shrieks as Tubbo punches him in the shoulder, giving him a pout. "Ow, Tubbo!" He whines. Tubbo glares at him.

"You deserved that," he says, before he turns back to his breakfast. "Anyways, good morning, Wilbur, Phil," he says calmly. They eye him in amusement.

"Hi, Tubbo," Wilbur greets.

Phil gives him a wave. "Hi, mate."

Tommy whines, "Why don't *I* get a polite greeting?" Tubbo stomps on his foot.

"Because you're a dick," he says mildly as Tommy yelps.

"Tubbo!" He complains yet again. Tubbo ignores him.

Wilbur rests his head on his chin. He looks ridiculously fond. "Glad to see you two are as wild as ever," he smiles. Tubbo refuses to let himself blush, but he's all-too aware that his smile is probably far too shy.

"Tubbo's just a bitch," Tommy grumbles, glaring at Tubbo. Wilbur shakes his head.

“Anyways, boys, I wanted to get your opinion on something,” Wilbur starts. Tommy straightens up a bit, attention on Wilbur. Tubbo eyes him curiously.

He asks, “What’s up, Wil?” Wilbur shrugs.

““Was wondering if you guys would wanna start planning out bringing my character back on the SMP,” Wilbur says casually.

Tubbo chokes. He can’t stop himself from jerking his head towards Tommy, who’s staring, a bit wide-eyed. He shakes it off quickly enough, though, and before Tubbo can react Tommy’s responding, “Sure, Wil!”

Wilbur grins excitedly. “Good, good!” He claps his hands together. “Man, I have *so* many plans for what comes next.” Tubbo’s chest feels tight.

Looking at Tommy out of the corners of his eyes, Tubbo can’t help but notice that Tommy’s smile has grown a bit strained. “I’m excited to see it,” Tommy says. Tubbo forces himself to nod.

“It’ll be neat!” Tubbo chirps. His stomach is turning into knots, despite his words. Because he- he knows that Tommy’s in a *much* better mindset as opposed to how he was feeling back in December, during Exile and Doomsday, but...Tubbo can’t help but worry, still.

Tommy took Ghostbur’s death the worst out of all of them. Tubbo’s not sure he ever absolved himself of that guilt.

Tubbo just barely notices Phil eyeing the two of them, something glinting in his eye. “You sure you’re okay with it, Tommy?” Phil asks carefully. Wilbur’s eyes immediately sharpen.

“Yeah- you don’t have to do this if you don’t want, Tommy,” Wilbur says hurriedly. “Your character’s gonna take the brunt of my character’s messed up shit, you know.”

Tubbo reaches towards Tommy, taking his hand under the table. Tommy glances at him. “It’s fine,” Tommy says easily. Tubbo squeezes his hand. Tommy squeezes back. “I’ll be alright, I promise.”

Wilbur and Phil both look at him in concern. “Just know if you get uncomfortable, you can let us know, alright?” Wilbur confirms. Tommy gives him a smile. To anyone but Tubbo, it’d look entirely genuine.

“I know,” Tommy says. “Don’t worry.”

“...Okay, Tommy,” Wilbur responds hesitantly. He looks *excited*, though, and Tubbo, in that moment, really gets why Tommy always forced himself to go through this awful stuff yet again. Wilbur’s happiness is contagious, and it’s not like Tommy’s ever hidden the fact that he’ll throw away everything to make the people he cares about happy.

Tubbo gives it another few minutes to alleviate suspicion, before he stands. “Tommy, can I talk to you for a sec?” Tubbo asks. Tommy gives him a look like he knows exactly what Tubbo’s doing, but he nods anyway.

“Yeah,” Tommy agrees. Tubbo immediately starts tugging him into their room, flashing a smile over his shoulder.

“We’ll be back in a bit!” He calls. Wilbur and Phil just wave, not looking suspicious in the slightest. Tubbo’s relieved.

Tubbo closes the door behind Tommy as soon as they get into the room, and spins on his heel to face Tommy. “Tommy,” he starts. Tommy immediately cuts him off.

“Tubbo, I promise it’ll be *fine*,” Tommy stresses. He places his hands on Tubbo’s shoulders. “Seriously. I’m fine. I’ve been fine. I can handle Wilbur, I promise.”

Tubbo searches his eyes for a moment. “Yeah, suppose I believe you on that,” Tubbo says quietly. Then, as gentle as he can: “But... Tommy, you’re going to have to hear Ghostbur die again.”

Tommy closes his eyes. His next breath in is shaky. “...I know,” he whispers. “I remember. I- I can handle it.”

Tubbo wraps his arms around Tommy’s chest. “Just know that you can bow out, okay?” Tubbo says gently. “You don’t have to do any of this. Wilbur will still love you. Don’t forget that.”

Wrapping his arms around Tubbo’s back, Tommy lays his head on Tubbo’s own. “I know,” Tommy repeats. “You all have made that very clear to me.”

Tubbo tilts his head back to give Tommy a small smile. “Good,” he states. He pulls back and grabs Tommy’s hand again. “Let’s go ahead and go back out there, then,” he says.

Tommy threads his fingers through Tubbo’s. “Let’s,” he responds, grinning.

And they do.

-

In the end, it’s exactly what Tubbo predicted that ends up making Tommy the most emotional.

The streams leading up to the revival stream are fine. Most of the time, it’s Tommy just hanging out on his own or with Tubbo and Ranboo, just making subtle references to his upcoming plans. Tommy’s at the point where this is *mostly* disconnected in his head; the environment being different enough and Tommy knowing that all of his friends on this server truly do care about him.

Dream will never hurt him again. No one will let him. When Tommy gets in his own head, he just has to remember that, and it helps.

Techno plays on the SMP for the first time in a *while*, a couple days before the fateful stream. “You guys have really torn up this server,” Techno says dryly at one point, staring down at the crater. “Seriously, you really gotta clean it up sometime.”

It says a lot that all Tommy feels is faint annoyance. He levels a deadpan look at his camera – hopefully Techno’s watching. “Are you being serious right now?” He asks.

“Yes.”

“...You suck.”

Techno’s voice sounds amused as he responds, “I have done *nothin’* wrong in my life *ever*.”

“That is the biggest lie you’ve ever told.”

“Why you slanderin’ me, Tommy?”

“I’m just telling the truth, man!”

Tommy’s cheeks hurt from grinning at this point, and Tommy can tell that Techno’s seconds away from laughing.

The day before the stream, Dream calls him.

“Hi, Dream-” Tommy greets, before he’s interrupted.

“Tommy, are you sure you want to do this?” Dream asks without preamble. His tone softens. “I don’t want- you don’t have to go through this again,” he reassures, voice painfully caring. Tommy’s heart squeezes.

He lets out a breath, and says, “I’ll be fine, Dream.” Dream lets out a bit of a doubtful noise, and Tommy insists, “*Really*. I’ll be alright.”

Dream takes a moment to respond. “...Okay, Tommy,” he concedes. “Just let me know if it becomes too much, alright? I’ll pull the plug. I don’t give a shit about the SMP – I care about you.”

Tommy snorts, even as fondness tugs at his grin. “Getting rather soft there, Dream,” he teases. “One might think you actually have a heart after all.” Dream splutters.

“Shut up- you- you little shit-” Tommy laughs loudly, and Dream cuts himself off. “You’re awful,” Dream says. Tommy just hears affection through the annoyance, though, so all he does is laugh harder.

In the end, the stream comes and goes fairly quickly. Tommy does his last on-stream planning with Tubbo and Ranboo, giving them a little hug in-game before he goes into the prison. He can hear the support in their voices- the same as it was for the actual thing, but this time, Tommy knows the support is for *him*, not necessarily his character.

Going into the prison is even easier now. The first time, Tommy’d been nervous as *fuck* about going in. The prison still haunts his dreams, sometimes, though the nightmares are getting further and further far between. But...nothing can compare to the sheer *presence* of the original prison; to the way the walls seemed to crush down on his shoulders and the pressure

of the Elder Guardian sounds. Nothing can compare to the heat of the lava against his back, the obsidian boiling hot under his feet.

And absolutely *nothing* can compare to Dream being *right there*, able to kill him in seconds.

Sam does his normal prison-visit speech to Ghostbur, while Tommy lies in wait. The axe waits in his hotbar. Sometimes, still, Tommy can't help but beat himself up for being *stupid* enough to bring out his axe before he was all the way to Dream, the first time. Tubbo and Ranboo both have reassured him that it's not his fault, but...still.

It's much too quickly that they're into the main area, and Sam's sending Ghostbur across. Tommy goes with him, pulling out the axe a second early, and- it all snowballs from there.

The first time around, Tommy- Tommy froze. He didn't know what to do, with Dream screaming at him from across the lava and Sam yelling at him *right there* and Ghostbur crying with Dream's sword at his throat. Sam had been grabbing him, shaking him, and all Tommy could do was *stare* as Dream drove his sword through Ghostbur's gut.

He'll never forget the terror in Ghostbur's screams.

But...now, even though Tommy *knows* that Ghostbur's not the same, that it's just Wilbur with a voice modifier, Tommy knows he needs to do *something* different. He fucked up, back then. If he can even make up for it a *little* bit by helping *this* Ghostbur, Tommy will do it.

And if the tears pricking at the backs of his eyes are real as he helps Ghostbur count his breaths, well, no one can blame him.

Tommy can't help but stare at the screen in horror as Ghostbur dies. And- he knows, he *knows* that his Ghostbur has been dead for *ages*. He knows that Tommy's failure is decades old, and that there's nothing Tommy could've done, it still feels like he's died all over again. The grief- it hurts.

Blinking back his tears, Tommy continues with the performance.

It takes a weight off of his shoulders when they're out of the prison. Sam *finally* leaves, and when Tommy reunites with Tubbo and Ranboo, he can't help but let his shoulders slump. The pain's already ebbing, but...it always helps to be back with his best friends after streams like this.

"You okay?" Tubbo asks immediately, Ranboo coming close and crouching at him as if checking him for injuries. Tommy smiles for the briefest moment; ender, Ranboo's always so sweet. Tommy can barely handle it sometimes.

Tommy answers quietly, "Yeah." And he can't see Tubbo's face, but he can guess just how doubtful he looks. "Let's go check out the crater," Tommy urges. "Wilbur- we need to check for Wilbur."

And they do, and- there he is. Tommy's heart stutters the smallest amount, but in the here and now, he can't help but feel safe when he hears Wilbur's voice. Especially since his

character's not to the point of outright manipulating Tommy, yet.

They talk. Wilbur taunts Tubbo and Ranboo for a bit; Tommy remembers his anger the first time that happened and channels it. Then, Wilbur goes off to do his own thing.

Ranboo's *what the hell did you do* is the last thing Tommy hears before he ends stream. It sends a little pain spiking through Tommy's heart – he doesn't quite remember what exactly was said, last time, but he does remember Ranboo was upset after. He didn't think that it was to the point of *blame*, though.

There's a silence between them, for a moment. Tommy closes his browser and clicks open discord to see Ranboo blinking at the screen. Tubbo looks mildly shocked. "You know," Ranboo begins once Tommy clicks on his own camera, "I have no idea why I said that. I never blamed you, I just- I just forgot what I said last time."

Tommy stares at him for a bit, before he snorts. "Is this a *non-canon* moment then, Ranboob?" Tommy teases, giving him a grin so that he knows that there's no hard feelings. Ranboo's shoulders slump a little in relief. Tubbo laughs.

"I suppose so," Ranboo says dramatically, shaking his head. "Can't believe this has happened to me."

Bowing his head as if mournful, Tommy responds, "Happens to us all."

They all laugh for a bit, before Tubbo's eyes sharpen. "You're alright, though, right Tommy?"

Tommy lets out a breath. "Yeah, I am." At that moment, a new DM pops up from Dream. Tommy absently clicks on it.

It's their group chat with Tubbo and Ranboo. *hey*, Dream sends. *just wanted to check up on you. you're doing okay, right?*

Tommy's smile quirks. *yeah, we're all fine*, he answers for all of them. *thanks :)*

Dream just responds with another :)

"I saw your stream," Tubbo says quietly. "You looked devastated. More devastated than you normally do."

Shrugging, Tommy adopts a wry smile. "I was sad," Tommy admits easily. "I miss him. A lot. But...it's more that I miss him than I was completely destroyed, y'know?" Tubbo's eyes close briefly. Ranboo looks sad.

"...Yeah," Tubbo whispers. Ranboo nods a bit, swiping at his eyes. A small smile appears on his face, though.

"I haven't said this enough recently, I think," Ranboo says softly. Tommy braces himself- that tone from Ranboo *always* means that he's about to be sweet. "But Tommy- I hope you realize how strong you are. You're *so* strong."

“St-op,” Tommy whines, drawing it out. He knows his cheeks must be bright red. Ranboo’s smile grows a bit. His eyes flicker over to the side briefly before returning back to normal.

“You too, Tubbo,” Ranboo adds, before adding on, “You’re both so strong.” Tubbo flips him off, but a smile is tugging at his lips. Tommy can’t help but snicker a bit. “You’re both so strong,” Ranboo repeats.

Tommy sinks a little further into his chair. “Thanks, Ranboo,” Tommy says, embarrassed. “You’re pretty pog too, I guess.”

“Thank you!” Ranboo says brightly. Tommy shakes his head, before a ding rings in his ears and he glances over to his DMs.

He frowns, clicking them open. “Wilbur wants to speak to me,” he says. Tubbo rolls his eyes, but his smile is fond.

“Guess you’d better go talk to big brother, then,” Tubbo jests. Ranboo laughs. Tommy gives him the finger.

“Shut the fuck up.” Tommy hovers over the call button, and adds, “I’ll call you guys later, alright?”

“Alright,” Ranboo responds. “See you soon, Toms.”

“See you soon,” Tommy echoes, before he joins the call.

-

Wilbur’s had enough.

At first, it was just an inkling that something wasn’t quite right. After MCC4, Wilbur had made the habit of keeping Tommy’s streams open on his second monitor, so that Wilbur could make sure that he wasn’t being a major dickhead while teasing Tommy. It lets him know when he needs to ease up a bit on his teasing when Tommy can’t tell him off in-call. The first time Wilbur had streamed on the Dream SMP and pulled a whole plot out of his ass, he had Tommy’s stream open, of course, and he hadn’t known what to make of Tommy’s sometimes-strange reactions.

During those first streams, Wilbur had noticed that Tommy sometimes got complicated looks on his face, before they were swiftly wiped away. Wilbur hadn’t known what to think about them, and they hadn’t seemed like a big deal, so he ignored them.

But then came the election, and the shitshow plot-wise that followed after it. Wilbur made sure to check in on Tommy every time they did a lore stream, and Tommy seemed fine for most of it. Wilbur had to reassure him a bit after streams, but again, he didn’t think much of it. Tommy’s sensitive sometimes, and when someone’s being a shithead to him, even in roleplay, Wilbur’s aware that it can suck ass.

Exile came. And Tommy suddenly seemed *far* too affected by the streams. He never talked to Wilbur about it, barring when Wilbur, Phil, and Techno stepped in and made him end Exile

sooner than planned. But Wilbur's not stupid. He knows his little brother, knows that Tommy was *genuinely* upset during those streams. It didn't help that he almost immediately went dark after every single stream.

It came to the point where Tommy didn't seem to be acting at all – which *could* just be a sign of Tommy being insanely good at acting, but... Wilbur can't help but worry that that's not the case.

And then there's the whole shitstorm that happened in March – Tommy streamed his death, and his reactions seemed more normal at least, but then Ranboo vanished and Tommy and Tubbo went to *America*. Ranboo needed it, that much was obvious, but it's still so *odd*. They'd looked so much more at home with each other than they'd ever looked before. Wilbur was happy for them, he was, but...he couldn't help but wonder.

And now this.

Tommy- when Wilbur glanced over at Tommy's stream during Ghostbur's last moments, Tommy looked *devastated*. Wilbur hasn't seen Tommy look that emotional in ages. And, once again, Tommy immediately disappeared to be in call with Ranboo and Tubbo immediately after.

Wilbur wants to know what's going on. He needs to know if Tommy's alright.

And so he DMs Tommy, trying his best to shove down the nervous knots in his stomach, and waits.

Chapter End Notes

hehehehe the time's finally (almost) here!!!

thank you so much for reading, hope you enjoyed <3

safe

Chapter Summary

“I’m fine, Wil,” Tommy reassures. “I was a little shaken up, I’ll admit, but I’m all good now.” And he is. Tubbo, Ranboo, Wilbur and Dream and everyone, they all help. Even if they don’t know it. They help.

Wilbur doesn’t seem reassured, though. “No- Tommy, *listen*,” he insists. “Tommy- it’s more than that. Why have you been so *weird* after all these streams?”

Tommy draws up short. “What do you mean?” Tommy asks carefully. Guarded.

Chapter Notes

it's time! :D

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur looks entirely too drawn and worn when Tommy joins the call.

“Wil?” He asks in concern. “You alright?” Wilbur just stares at him for a moment, searching his eyes through the screen.

“I think I should be asking you that question, Toms.”

Tommy furrows his brows. “What do you mean?” Tommy takes a moment to think, then his shoulders drop in realization. “Oh, do you mean the stream earlier?”

“Yeah, and-” Wilbur starts, but Tommy cuts him off.

“I’m fine, Wil,” Tommy reassures. “I was a little shaken up, I’ll admit, but I’m all good now.” And he is. Tubbo, Ranboo, Wilbur and Dream and everyone, they all help. Even if they don’t know it. They help.

Wilbur doesn’t seem reassured, though. “No- Tommy, *listen*,” he insists. “Tommy- it’s more than that. Why have you been so *weird* after all these streams?”

Tommy draws up short. “What do you mean?” Tommy asks carefully. Guarded.

Wilbur’s shoulders drop. He looks tired. “Toms,” he starts, quiet. “Don’t think I haven’t noticed how you’re always a little too deep into the acting for streams on the SMP. How

you're always more tired after. Sadder.”

Tommy breathes out, carefully controlled. “Wilbur, I-”

“Tommy, you looked so *scared*, earlier,” Wilbur adds on, cutting Tommy off. “I’ve only ever seen you like that after streams on the SMP. And you’re a brilliant actor, I know you are, but...I’m worried, Toms.”

Biting his lip, Tommy looks uncertainly at his group chat with Tubbo and Ranboo. They’re still in the call. “...Hold on. I’ll be back in a sec, Wil,” Tommy says quietly. Quickly, he rejoins their call, leaving Wilbur behind.

Tubbo was speaking, but immediately cuts off when he sees Tommy. His eyes narrow, and Ranboo, head resting in his chin, sits up straight. “Tommy?” Tubbo asks.

“I think we should tell Wilbur,” Tommy says without preamble. Both his best friends blink.

“...What?” Ranboo questions.

Tommy sighs, putting his head in his hands. “He started asking me about why I act so off sometimes after lore streams. I was gonna brush it off, but...” Tommy pauses, before he says, voice small, “I wanna tell him.”

Ranboo bows his head, clearly thinking. Tubbo just stares at the screen. They’re both quiet, for a long, long moment.

“...Okay,” Tubbo finally says. Tommy looks at him, eyes wide. “Okay. Let’s do it.”

Ranboo exhales quietly. “Yeah,” he agrees. “I think- yeah. Let’s tell him.”

Tommy looks between them. “That was...quick,” he says slowly. Tubbo shrugs causally, though Tommy can see the nervous tension lining his shoulders.

“Wil’s made it obvious how much he cares about us from the start,” Tubbo says. “We know he loves us. We know he wants to protect us.” Tubbo lets out a small laugh. “Honestly, it would’ve made more sense if Wilbur found out first, instead of Dream.”

Ranboo chimes in. “Wilbur makes you feel safe,” he directs at Tommy. “Doesn’t he?”

Tommy bows his head. “Yeah,” he whispers.

“Us too.” Tommy looks up to see Ranboo smiling. “Let’s tell him,” he encourages. “Let’s do it.”

“Okay,” Tommy says, mostly to himself. “I’ll add you to the call, then.”

“Yeah,” Tubbo responds. Tommy makes to leave, before an idea pops into his head.

“Wait!” Ranboo and Tubbo both jerk, surprised. Tommy hesitates, then asks, “Can...can we tell Phil and Techno too?”

Tubbo closes his eyes briefly. "Sure," he says, reopening them. "They're almost as much our family as Wil is." Ranboo's got this soft little grin tugging at his lips, and Tommy doesn't need his nod to know that he agrees.

"Okay," Tommy whispers, relieved for some reason. "I'll add them to the call also."

With that, he *actually* leaves the call, and rejoins Wilbur. He looks even more worried.

"Sorry," Tommy says quietly. "Here, lemme just-" Tommy quickly adds Tubbo and Ranboo to the call. They join immediately, and Tommy calls Phil and Techno as well.

Tubbo raises his hand in a little wave. "Hi, Wil," he greets. Ranboo just gives a little smile, the edges tipping down a bit in nervousness.

Wilbur jerks a bit, eyes widening in confusion. "Tommy, what-" Tommy holds up a hand.

"Sorry, Wil," he apologizes again. "I just- only wanna explain this once, and this pertains to Tubbo and Ranboo, too." Wilbur narrows his eyes, but thankfully leans back in his seat and doesn't say another word.

Phil and Techno join quickly. "Heya," Phil greets at the same time as Techno says, "Hullo." Surprisingly, he turns on his camera alongside Phil's. Tommy's glad, though. He always feels better when he can see all their faces.

"Thanks for coming, guys," Tommy says. He breathes out, trying to shake out his nerves. "Alright," he says. "Wil, you...you wanted to know why I act so off after lore."

"...Yes," Wilbur confirms slowly. Phil sits up a little straighter in his chair.

"Oh, is this about how you concern us almost every lore stream?" Phil asks, deceptively calm. Tommy winces.

"Oh, yeah, I have been wonderin' about that," Techno adds on casually. Tubbo lets out a bit of a laugh. It's strained.

Tommy glances at Tubbo when he says, tinged with amusement, "Guess we haven't kept it as hidden as well as we thought we did, huh."

Ranboo snorts. "Guess not," he responds. Wilbur raises an eyebrow.

"So it's all three of you," he says consideringly. "That makes sense. You gonna stop being cryptic and tell us already?"

Tommy, despite the situation, rolls his eyes and snipes back, "Patience, Wilbur, fucking shit."

Wilbur just crossed his arms and gives him an unimpressed look. Tommy sighs a bit, and lets his annoyed mask fall. He glances at Tubbo and Ranboo before focusing in on Wilbur. "I guess the place to start," he says uncertainly, "Is that...this isn't the first time we've lived."

A silence. Phil raises his eyebrows. "Come again?" He says in disbelief.

"I know it sounds crazy, but please, just hear us out," Tommy says pleadingly. "Just...listen to us until the end." The three look uncertain, but they settle back into their seats and wait. Tommy can't help but relax the smallest bit.

"The world was completely different than this one," Tommy continues, taking the lead. "I don't remember much from when I was small, but I do know that I was alone." Tommy glances at Wilbur's picture. "At least, until I met a certain Wilbur Soot."

Wilbur's eyebrows shoot up. Tommy hurries on before he can interrupt, "You- well, *he* took me in. Phil was his dad, but I never really saw him around. Techno was also there sometimes." Tommy snorts a little at the disbelieving looks on Phil and Techno's faces. "He never really gave me the time of day, though. Neither of them did."

"Tommy found me not too long after you found him," Tubbo picks up. "I was in a box, apparently. I can't remember much." A small, amused smile crossed his lips. "I do remember that we were little shits right off the bat, though."

"Unsurprising," Wilbur breaks in dryly, though he looks- shaken, to say the least. Tommy gives him a mild glare.

"Shut up." Tommy pauses briefly to collect his thoughts. "Phil and Techno both...weren't the best, honestly. Weren't really *there* for anything at all."

"You two are *much* better in that regard," Tubbo tells the two. The distress in Phil's brows eases, and even Techno seems to lose a bit of his frown. Tommy laughs a bit.

"Yeah, they were dickheads," he says easily. "You're miles better than those pricks."

Phil says slowly, "Well, I'm glad for that, I guess." Tommy nods.

"You should be." Tommy lets out an exhale, and says more quietly, "I guess the most important part is that eventually, Wilbur decided to leave. To explore. Of course, me 'n Tubbo decided to come along."

"Wait," Wilbur interjects. "Sorry, but- are you saying that I was your older brother in this? But Phil was *my* dad, and not yours?" Tommy catches Tubbo wince a bit out of the corner of his eyes.

Tubbo says quietly, "...Yeah, except I never really...was your brother." Wilbur's eyes grow horribly sad.

"Well then, that Wilbur was a prick," he said firmly.

Phil interjects, "Looks like all of us were."

"What a messed-up version of the family dynamic," Techno mumbles, making all of them snort.

"You're telling me," Tommy says dryly.

Wilbur adds on, "You're my family, Tubbo. All of you are." Ranboo rubs the back of his head, embarrassed.

Tubbo smiles a bit, small and shy. "Thanks." His smile quickly vanishes. "After we left, well...we stumbled across this new land. Esemipi."

"Tubbo and I decided to settle down there first. You went off and did your own thing for a while, Wil." Tommy swallows. "Quickly, we met some new people. Made some new friends. And I..." His eyes dart to all of their images before he looks down at his hands. "I found some disks."

Tommy glances up to see Wilbur's eyebrows knit together. He can see him slowly, slowly starting to put the pieces together. He's always been ridiculously smart. "What...were the friends' names?" Wilbur asks carefully.

"...Dream. George. Sapnap, Punz, BadBoyHalo."

Wilbur lets out a slow, shaky breath. "You cannot be saying what I think you're saying," Wilbur basically *pleads*. Tommy just gives him a wry smile.

"There's a reason I don't like small, dark spaces, Wil." Wilbur stares at him, devastated.

"...The SMP is your *life*?" He asks. Phil gasps, and Techno's eyes widen in realization.

Tubbo's the one to answer, voice quiet, "For the most part...yeah."

Phil swallows. "When do you come in, Ranboo?" He asks, strained. Ranboo shrugs.

"Around the same time I did here," he answers. "Right around exile."

A silence falls, heavy and constricting. Tommy forces himself to continue through the knot in his throat. "A lot is different," he explains. "The- more light-hearted stuff – like that one stream where I fucked with you and got trapped under that piston, Wil – rarely happened, and there's small differences in the events and such. But...most of the big things stayed the same."

"...Why?" Wilbur asks, horrified. "Why put yourselves through this? Why-" He cuts off, choked. "Why let me abuse you like I did?"

Tommy glances at Ranboo's image. "At first, it was to find Ranboo," he admits. "But, after..." Tommy shrugs. "I dunno. I didn't want to disappoint you guys by quitting."

Phil's eyes grow soft. "Tommy," he chides gently. His voice trembles the faintest amount. "You have to know that you wouldn't have disappointed us by bowing out."

"I know that now," Tommy says sheepishly. He knows without looking that Tubbo's glaring at him again. "I just- I dunno. It wasn't..." Tommy's voice grows quiet. "It wasn't all bad."

"This explains Exile," Techno mutters. "You actually *were* sufferin'."

“And- Ranboo,” Wilbur says, and Ranboo jumps a bit. “Was your panicking last month- was that because of-” Wilbur’s eyes grow wide. “Oh,” he whispers. “The working with Dream stuff.”

Ranboo’s shoulders hunch inwards. “...Yeah,” he whispers. “I- I didn’t know I did any of that until-” He cuts himself off, choked. Tommy’s heart pinches.

“Until the ideas came up naturally here,” Wilbur finishes softly. “Oh, Ranboo.”

Ranboo shakes his head, adopting a small smile. “It’s alright. I’m- I’m better now.” His smile grows soft. “Tommy and Tubbo helped.”

Tommy flushes a bit. Wilbur’s shoulders slump a bit, eyes glinting with affection. “I’m glad,” he whispers. His frown deepens, though. He continues, voice laden with guilt, “Boys- Tommy. I’m-”

“If you dare say that you’re sorry, I’ll hit you,” Tommy interrupts, deadpan. Wilbur blinks. “It wasn’t *you* that did all those things- any of you,” he directs pointedly at Phil and Techno. Phil has the decency to look a little sheepish through his guilt. Techno doesn’t seem to outwardly respond, but Tommy can see the way his shoulders relax slightly. “Don’t feel guilty,” he says again, softer.

Wilbur still looks upset. “I wrote this,” he says brokenly. And- Tommy knows he’s completely serious, but he can’t help but snort. Wilbur glares dully at him.

“Sorry, Wil,” Tommy says, still giggling a bit, “But you also wrote Phil fucking a fridge. And you fucked a salmon canonically. That did *not* happen originally.” Phil and Techno both snicker, and Wilbur giggles a little.

His face falls back into a frown soon after, though. “We were- we were horrible to you three,” Wilbur whispers. “All of us were. Even though we’re not the same, how-” He chokes up.

Phil picks up, voice gentle, “How did you learn to trust us?”

Tommy looks at Ranboo and Tubbo’s images. “It...” Tommy starts, trailing off. “It *was* hard, at first. I dunno about Ranboo, but I know I called Tubbo more than a few times panicking when I first saw you guys.”

“He did!” Tubbo confirms helpfully. He continues, a little more subdued, “It took us a while to get over it. But- SMP Earth helped.”

Techno suddenly snorts. “Tommy,” he says in amusement, “Did you really start off by stealin’ from us because of what happened durin’ our arc?” Tommy laughs.

“Ender, I’d forgotten about that.” Tommy smiles. “Yeah. Yeah, I did. I don’t regret it.”

Wilbur slams his face into the table suddenly. Tommy blinks at the screen. “The fucking question about TNT that first week we met,” he grumbles. “You were fucking *testing* us.”

Tommy giggles, stuffing a fist in his mouth to stifle them. Ranboo raises his eyebrows as Tubbo soon succumbs to the same fate. “Did you like- quiz them on whether they were the same people or not?” He asks in disbelief.

“Yup!” Tommy and Tubbo chirp in unison. Ranboo just stares at them.

“Y'know, smart move.” He nods approvingly. Tommy grins at him.

Phil lets out a little sigh, resting his chin in his palm. “No wonder you guys bonded so quickly,” he says softly. “How long had it been since you’d seen each other?”

Tommy winces, gaze darting to the ground. The silence hangs heavy for a moment. Ranboo’s the one that ends up answering, “Too...too long.”

“Way too long,” Tubbo whispers. All Tommy can do is nod. Phil lets out a little sympathetic hum.

Techno says, gruff and affectionate-sounding, “I’m glad you could trust us with this, even after everything.”

“Oh, yeah, you never answered my question,” Wilbur says. He sounds like he’s trying to sound cross. He’s failing.

Tommy shrugs, adopting a small smile. “Sure, you guys were shit last time,” he says easily. “And, I’ll admit, I was- I was afraid, at first-” Wilbur’s face drops. Tommy quickly continues, “But...you made it clear pretty damn quickly that you weren’t the same.”

“It was easy to learn to trust you,” Ranboo admits. “Especially when I saw how you guys were with Tommy and Tubbo on stream. You guys- you’re family.”

Tubbo quietly adds, arms wrapped around his torso but smiling softly, “You guys make us feel safe.”

Wilbur lets out a choked-off sound, pressing his forearms against his eyes. “*Fuck*, man, you can’t just *say* that,” he chokes out.

“I’m so glad,” Techno whispers. Phil’s outright crying; all he does is offer them a watery smile. Tommy grins back, blinking the tears out of his own eyes.

“Love you guys,” he says quietly. Tubbo and Ranboo quickly echo him. Wilbur’s breath hitches. Phil shakes his head, swiping at his own tears. Techno looks fond, and Tommy doesn’t comment on the way he dabs at one of his own eyes.

“We love you,” Phil says warmly. “And - and I think this goes for all of us - we are *so* proud of you boys.”

“You’re so strong,” Wilbur whispers. His eyes dart from side to side, and Tommy knows he’s looking at each of them in turn. “I’m privileged to call you three my brothers.”

Ranboo lets out a choked-off sound, turning away for a moment. Tommy faintly wonders if that was the first time Wilbur's actually called him his brother. Tubbo snuffles a bit, and Tommy buries his head in his hands, breathing in and out deeply so as to not burst into tears.

“Love you guys,” is all Techno says, and Tommy can't stop himself from letting more than a few tears out. From the sounds coming from his headphones, he's far from the only one.

They just...exist on call, for a while. The comfortable, emotion-charged silence lingers, but eventually they devolve into more mundane conversation. Tommy's chest doesn't lose its warmth, and from the looks on his best friends' faces, they're feeling just as light as he is. Phil, Techno, and Wilbur just look fond.

And in that moment, Tommy knows everything was worth it. Being here now, with Tubbo and Ranboo, with Phil and Wilbur and Techno, with his *family*-

Tommy's home.

-

Wilbur doesn't know why he thought he could do this.

“I'll be *fine*, ” Tommy had promised for the umpteenth time, just before Wilbur had started stream. “Seriously, Wil. I *know* you're not actually a shithead. I can just DM you to tone it down- I promise I'm fine with almost anything you can throw at me. I know you have good plans – don't throw them away just for me.” Wilbur had – and still has – his doubts, but had sighed and given in.

The thing is- Tommy may be fine. He may be able to handle the manipulation and sick sweetness Wilbur threads through his voice, the downright horrible way Wilbur treats him, but. But.

At this point, Wilbur doesn't think *he* can handle it.

The first stream, Wilbur goes on and on with his plans for the future, subtly manipulating Tommy's character the whole time. On Wilbur's second monitor, Tommy responds exactly how he should- indignant and angry and frustrated. And, most of all, fearful. Tommy begs, “*Please*, Wil,” at some point, and the expression on Wilbur's little brother's face *aches*.

It aches even more when Tommy rears up to defend Ranboo. “Don't you *dare* talk to him like that,” Tommy threatens. Ranboo moves slightly behind Tommy. The reminder that Ranboo was once afraid of Wilbur; that Wilbur was once someone who they needed protecting from, just makes Wilbur's heart hurt more.

He makes it through that stream. And the next, but- eventually, the sheer *guilt* gnawing at his gut becomes too much to ignore. He had plans, *so* many plans, had a whole new plot-line all figured out, but- no. No, he's not going to do this.

Wilbur starts slowly easing Tommy out of his streams. He stops requesting Tommy do stuff for him, creating a whole new plot-line out of nowhere with Quackity and Ranboo, and later

Tubbo. And it's better, knowing that Wilbur isn't causing his brother any more pain, hopefully.

Except-

It's in the middle of Wilbur's second Burger Van stream that he remembers- *fuck*, Ranboo had to go through his manipulation too. Tubbo had to suffer through Quackity's bullshit once before. They- they don't deserve to go through this again. They may be fine with it, and Wilbur's entirely aware that his character is more than just a manipulative fuck, but Wilbur sure as hell still is not okay with hurting his brothers in any way, shape, or form.

So Wilbur stops streaming on the SMP.

"Why've you stopped streaming lore, Wil?" Tubbo asks curiously one day, when they're all hanging out in call. Tommy glances up, curious. Ranboo doesn't stop what he's doing, but Wilbur has no doubt that he's listening.

Wilbur leans back in his seat. "I couldn't do it," Wilbur answers after a moment. Ranboo glances up, furrowing his brows.

"What do you mean?" He asks. Wilbur groans lightly in frustration.

"You three absolutely *ridiculous* children- you're literally re-living your trauma time and time again for the sake of my ideas," Wilbur states, giving them a mild glare. Ranboo, at the least, has the decency to look sheepish. Tommy and Tubbo just stare at him uncomprehendingly.

"Well, yeah," Tommy breaks in with his *are you stupid?* voice. "You had some plans you were really excited for! Why would you-"

"The thing is," Wilbur interrupts, "That I'm *not* excited for them anymore. I'm not fine with it, even if you dumbasses are. Not when I know they once hurt you. That's why I started easing you out of my streams, Toms-" Tommy's lips part slightly in realization- "And once I realized at least *one* of you was going to be hurt no matter what I did, I decided to stop."

Tommy ducks his head, blushing. Tubbo says flatly, "You're a sap, Wil." He's grinning in the way that Wilbur knows means that he's delighted. Wilbur flips him off anyway.

"I can't fix anything my evil alter-ego did," Wilbur says softer, smirking at the giggles they let slip, "But I can prevent you from feeling at least some pain now."

Ranboo says quietly, "Thanks, Wil." Wilbur smiles warmly.

"You three deserve to be happy," he states. "And I'm going to do my damn best to make it possible for you to have the happiest life possible."

Wilbur's little brothers grin at him delightedly, and Wilbur's heart settles.

Good. *That's* how they should always look.

Wilbur's going to keep them smiling like that.

-

When Tubbo sees Wilbur again the first time in person after the revelation, he swears Wilbur doesn't let go of him for a solid five minutes.

He certainly doesn't complain, melting into Wilbur's embrace, but it *is* a little ridiculous. But then again, this Wilbur's always been incredibly physically affectionate. Tubbo just lays his head against Wilbur's heart, and lets it happen.

Wilbur leans back first, ruffling Tubbo's hair. "You ready?" He asks, eyes sparkling. Tubbo beams up at him, nodding his head.

"Yup!" He says, grabbing Wilbur's hand. "C'mon, let's go!"

Wilbur laughs, throwing his head back. "Hold your horses, impatient child," he says amusedly. "Tommy'll still be there in a few hours. No need to rush."

Just to be annoying, Tubbo responds cheekily, "I don't have any horses." Wilbur cuffs him in the head.

"Shut the fuck up and get into the car." Tubbo happily obliges. Wilbur hands him the aux cord without asking; Tubbo opens up his audio-mixing app, and starts playing with only a beat of hesitation.

"Okay, so this is what I have so far," Tubbo says nervously. He tries to stop himself from staring at Wilbur, but he can't help but glance at his face constantly, trying to gauge any sort of reaction. Unfortunately for him, Wilbur's poker face is far too good.

Tubbo, a couple of months ago, had started experimenting with making his own music. It's always been something he wanted to do, *before* – but he only really gained the confidence to when he turned fifteen, and...well, stuff started happening quickly. He never really had the time, and what little time he had he prioritized maintaining the songs he already knew.

But, once Wilbur had caught wind that Tubbo aspired to create music someday, he'd instantly started nagging him about it. Even after over a year, Tubbo still is surprised sometimes by how genuinely excited Wilbur is about Tubbo's passions. Tommy's been urging Tubbo to do this for forever, but Tommy's Tommy. He's always been Tubbo's biggest hype man, and that's exactly why Wilbur's support...doesn't necessarily mean more, but pushes Tubbo harder.

And so they've made a point to work on Tubbo's music whenever they can together. Tubbo's endlessly grateful.

Finally, the rough draft of the song ends. Tubbo eyes Wilbur eagerly and nervously all in one. Wilbur finally flashes Tubbo a smile, eyes alight, before returning his eyes to the road. The smile remains. "That was good," he encourages. Tubbo unconsciously relaxes. "It's a really

solid foundation- a few chords need work here and there, and you really need to be more confident while singing, but that's an incredible start, Tubbo."

Tubbo flushes. "Thanks," he says quietly. Wilbur reaches over with one hand and places it on his knee, jostling it slightly.

"This is gonna be good," Wilbur says firmly. "The world isn't gonna be ready."

Tubbo just laughs, and sinks into the seat. "You're flattering me, Wil," Tubbo says in amusement. Wilbur just shoots him a look. Tubbo grins back innocently. "You know what the world *really* isn't gonna be ready for," Tubbo draws out teasingly.

"What, Tubbo," Wilbur asks, deadpan. He already knows the answer, but Tubbo says it anyway.

"Your new album- I'm playing it over and over again until we get to Tommy's. You can't stop me."

Wilbur sighs, indulgent. "Alright, Tubbo," he concedes. Tubbo beams.

His voice hurts within twenty minutes of starting to play Wilbur's music. He could not care less.

He's content.

-

"*Wilbur!*"

Tommy launches himself directly into Wilbur's arms, clinging on tight even as Wilbur stumbles back a few steps. "Jesus *christ*- hello, Tommy," Wilbur says after regaining his balance. He grins down warmly. "How're you doing on this fine day?"

"Good!" He says excitedly. Wilbur laughs and places Tommy back on the ground. Tommy instantly shifts targets, bolting towards the car.

Tubbo's much more prepared, and when Tommy wraps his arms around his best friend, Tubbo's gripping back just as tightly. "Hi," Tubbo laughs, swinging Tommy around a bit before placing him on the ground, pulling back the slightest bit. Tommy feels lighter than he has in ages.

"Hey!" Tommy greets, beaming down at Tubbo. Tubbo's eyes sparkle with glee, and Tommy can't help but pull Tubbo into another brief hug. Tubbo indulges him, hugging him back. When Tommy glances up at Wilbur, he looks ridiculously fond.

Tommy pulls back, leaving his arm around Tubbo's shoulders. "So," he starts. "You boys ready to see the glories of my hometown?"

Wilbur raises his eyebrows, pointedly glancing around at the perfectly ordinary suburb surrounding them. "Seems pretty glorious to me," he says, deadpan. Tubbo snickers. Tommy

glares at them both.

“This town produced *me!*” Tommy says dramatically, staring to lead them down the street. “And that’s the most glorious thing *any* town could claim to do.”

“What about the town the Queen was born in?” Tubbo asks curiously. Tommy glances down, giving him a flat stare. There’s a glint in his eyes that tells Tommy that Tubbo knows exactly what he’s doing.

Tommy sighs. “I *suppose*, that town has a greater claim to gloriousness than my town does. But!” Tommy says brightly, holding up a finger. “This is a *close* second.”

“What about Jack Manifold’s town?”

“He’s at the very bottom of the list, Tubbo- practically underground. Honestly, you should know that.”

“Yeah, I do.” Tubbo quickly swipes at his phone, before smiling innocently up at Tommy. “Just wanted that on video so I could send it to him.”

Tommy gapes at him. Wilbur doubles over, laughing so hard he can’t breathe. Tommy gapes some more, before he snaps his mouth shut and keeps on walking, dragging Tubbo along. “Jack can handle it,” Tommy decides, biting back his own grin. “It’s true, anyway.”

As if he can hear Tommy, Jack’s calling his phone the next instant. “Tommy, how *dare* you?!” He yells once Tommy picks up. Tommy snickers, rubbing the back of his head.

“You see, Jack,” he starts, “I would apologize, but...”

He trails off, and predictably, Jack breaks in, “But?!”

“But that would simply be lying, and my mother would be very disappointed in me if I lied.”

“Oh, you *wanker!*” Jack curses. Tubbo and Tommy share a look, and just laugh.

“Sorry, Jack!” Tubbo says cheekily.

“*Thank* you, Tubbo, finally someone who-”

“I mean, I don’t *disagree* with Tommy, but-”

“Oh, come *on!*”

-

Ranboo’s knee bounces up and down, and he places a hand on it to still it. It doesn’t work, really, but Ranboo pays no more mind to it, instead staring at his PC screen. His group chat with Tommy and Tubbo is open, the call going, but so far he’s the only one in the call.

He's being impatient. He knows he is. But he just got out of school, and his parents finally told him their decision on the *thing*, and Ranboo's so excited he can barely sit still.

Well, he's not sitting still, but that's beside the point.

Waiting approximately thirty more seconds, Ranboo finally starts spamming. *join the call*, he sends in the chat, before sending it probably a hundred more times. Again and again and again and again and again-

"Fuckin' hell, I'm *here!*" Tommy's annoyed exclamation sounds in Ranboo's headphones, and he immediately sits up straight in excitement. Tubbo joins soon after, turning on his camera just to glare at Ranboo.

"I was cooking!" He complains. "This better be important-"

"It is," Ranboo interrupts breathlessly. His abnormal level of excitement must become clear to the two, because Tubbo loses his glare and Tommy settles into his seat, eyes wide and curious.

"What the hell has got you this excited, bossman?" Tubbo asks. Ranboo grins widely.

"I graduate in two weeks!" He exclaims. Tommy and Tubbo look at him weirdly.

"Yeah, we know," Tommy says slowly. "You've only been talking about it constantly for the past four months or so."

Ranboo rolls his eyes. "Yeah, but- guys, I asked my parents and they finally said they'd support me and- guys, they're letting me move to the UK," he explains in a rush.

Both of his best friends' eyes immediately go wide. "You're *joking*," Tubbo gasps. Ranboo shakes his head.

"Nope!"

"Holy *shit*," Tommy says. A slow grin forms on his face. "*Holy shit!*"

"Right?!" Ranboo says. He's uncharacteristically bouncy in his seat, but he could literally not care any less at the second. "As soon as I graduate, I can head up, so once you guys give the go-ahead I can go ahead and buy my tickets like, right now."

Tubbo and Tommy go quiet, for a moment, eyes darting slightly to the side as if they're looking at each other. Ranboo sinks back a bit, saying, "That is...if you- if you want me, of course-"

"Don't be a dumbass, Ranboo," Tommy brushes off. Ranboo relaxes. "Of fuckin' course we're excited, it's just-"

"We were literally about to surprise you with this today," Tubbo cuts off. Tubbo leans forward in his seat and starts clicking around on his computer. Ranboo thoroughly destroys

the lingering knots of insecurity insistent on lodging in his stomach, and eyes Tubbo's face curiously. Now it's Tommy's turn to look bouncy, hands pinned under his thighs.

"What are you planning?" Ranboo asks suspiciously. A grin's tugging at his lips, though, so his question no-doubt doesn't get the intended effect. Tommy just flashes him a grin. Tubbo remains focused.

Tommy says cheekily, "Just wait and see, bitch boy!" Ranboo sighs.

"Yeah, alright."

Thankfully, it doesn't take long for Tubbo to go, "Aha!" Ranboo leans forward eagerly. "Okay- Ranboo, check your DMs," Tubbo requests – demands, really. Ranboo clicks into the DM as soon as the notification pops up. And-

Ranboo's breath catches in his throat.

Slowly, slowly, he clicks on the link and starts clicking through the pictures. It's- it's a house. A beautiful house, set on the waterfront and with forest behind it. It's lined with grey and colored brown and has a gorgeous little yard out in front. It looks exactly- it's exactly like-

"We started looking a couple of months ago," Tubbo starts lowly, once Ranboo's looked up at him. He has no doubt he looks absolutely dumbfounded. "After we got back from your place. We- we knew, after that, that we were never going to want to live long-term away from you again."

Tears burn at the backs of Ranboo's eyes. Tubbo's eyes soften, and he continues, "So we started looking for places. It wasn't easy finding one – especially with *someone's*-" Tubbo emphasizes the word, and Tommy jerks to attention- "Insistence on living in Brighton."

"Okay- you wanted to live near Wilbur, too!"

"Shut up!"

Tommy sighs and rolls his eyes. His eyes grow fond, though, as he says, "We found a place that looks as similar as possible to your old house. It's not perfect, but-" Tommy swallows, bowing his head as if embarrassed. "We really hope you like it."

Ranboo can't speak through the emotion curling through his throat. "Guys-" he starts, taking in a hitched breath. He scrubs at his eyes. "Guys, this is- this is *perfect*."

Tommy looks back up, eyes lighting up. Tubbo's smile grows. "Yeah?" He asks. Ranboo nods, grinning tearfully.

"*Yeah*, yeah," Ranboo echoes. "Of course I'd love to live with you guys there." Ranboo snuffles, bowing his head to dab at his eyes once again. "That sounds like a dream come true," Ranboo says, voice wet. When he looks up, Tubbo and Tommy look so ridiculously affectionate.

"Okay then," Tubbo murmurs. "I'll confirm the payment- you buy your tickets, alright?"

Ranboo grins larger than he thinks he ever has. Tommy laughs, bright and excited, and exclaims, “You’re gonna be here in two weeks!”

“I am,” Ranboo says breathlessly. “I am.”

Tubbo grins at the camera briefly. “I can’t *wait*,” he confesses. Ranboo shakes his head, sliding forward in his chair so he can start looking for tickets.

“Me neither, guys. Me neither.”

-

“Alright, settle down, you two.”

Tubbo has to physically stop himself from jumping in the air when a hand lands on his shoulder. He glances to the side to see Phil giving him an indulgent grin. “I know you’re excited,” Phil says. “I am too. But you’ve got-” and here Phil reaches out and snags the back of Tommy’s shirt, stopping him from *literally* running in circles around them- “To calm down.”

Tommy pouts. “I’ve got so much energy, though!” He whines. “And it’s *Ranboo*! We haven’t seen him in so long!”

Phil sighs. “Tommy, his flight doesn’t land for another ten minutes. You’ve gotta wait anyway, at least don’t drive literally everyone around us insane by running around like you’re five again.” That gets Tommy to blush a bit, staring at his shoes.

“Sorry,” he says sheepishly. Tubbo laughs at him. Tommy flips him off.

Shaking his head, Phil reassures, “It’s fine- just calm down, alright? He’ll be here soon.”

Tubbo and Tommy share a look, before they both sigh and sit down on the bench. “Alright,” Tubbo says overdramatically. “Guess I’ll just sit here and waste away...” he trails off. He sees Phil make to object with some exasperated comment, but instead Tubbo gets punched in the shoulder.

“Hey!” he exclaims, spinning to face Tommy. Tommy just grins at him, holding out a fist.

“Wanna play competitive paper-scissors-stone?”

Tubbo blinks, before grinning savagely and holding out his own fist. “You’re fucking *on*,” he challenges.

Fifteen minutes later, one hundred and sixty-eight games of paper-scissors-stone later, and Tubbo’s pretty sure he’s going to wake up with a black eye later.

“How did you two manage to fight playing paper-scissors-stone?” Phil asks exasperatedly. Tubbo just meets Tommy’s eyes for a split-second before they both grin at Phil innocently. Phil stares back at them for a moment before he sighs. “Seriously, you-” He cuts himself off. His eyes lock on something behind them, and a soft smile appears on his face.

“Hey,” he says. “Turn around.”

Tubbo does, and-

There he is.

Before Tommy’s even fully turned around, Tubbo’s up and running. His mind has barely processed anything, but it’s clearly enough because Ranboo’s running towards him and he’s fifteen yards away- ten- five- one-

Tubbo smashes into Ranboo, wrapping his arms around Ranboo’s waist as Ranboo hugs him back, spinning him around to bleed off the momentum. “Hey there,” Ranboo says. Tubbo can’t see his face, but he knows Ranboo’s grinning widely.

“Hi,” he mumbles, burrowing as far into Ranboo’s chest as he can. At that moment, a weight *slams* into Tubbo’s back, sending them both stumbling.

“Whoa- hi, Tommy,” Ranboo greets. Tubbo feels Ranboo adjust so his arms are wrapped around them both. Tommy’s head rests above Tubbo’s own.

“Hey there, Ran-boob,” Tommy responds. Ranboo, predictably, sighs.

Ranboo pulls back slightly, and Tubbo reluctantly accommodates to look him in the eyes. Ranboo’s are twinkling with happiness. Tubbo’s smile widens. “First time in four months that I see you, and that’s the greeting I get,” he says exasperatedly, but as predicted, he’s grinning. Tommy laughs.

“Gotta keep my brand!” He says. Ranboo gives him a look that’s more fond than anything.

“Your brand with us is just stupidity,” Ranboo tells him affectionately. Tubbo stifles a startled laugh; Tommy lets out an offended noise.

“How *dare* you- c’mon, Tubbo, we’re leaving. You don’t get to move in with us.” Tommy’s still smiling, though. They all are. Tubbo’s heart is more full than it’s *ever* been.

“You three are ridiculous,” Phil’s voice meets them. Tubbo glances over to see Phil finally making his way over. “C’mere, Ranboo,” Phil beckons, and soon enough Ranboo’s wrapped up in Phil’s arms. He looks a little stiff at first, but eases into it. Tubbo can relate. Phil’s hugs have that effect.

Ranboo lingers for a while, and when he finally pulls back, Phil gives him a warm smile.

“You ready to go home?” He asks. Home. Ender, Tubbo feels giddy thinking about it. Ranboo glances over his shoulder, and Tubbo gives him the biggest grin possible.

“Yeah,” Ranboo answers, eyes alight with joy. Tubbo and Tommy both sidle up to him. Tubbo slips his hand into Ranboo’s; Tommy nudges him with his shoulder and Ranboo absently wraps his arm around him. Ranboo grins down at them, then turns back to Phil.

“Yeah, I think I am.”

Chapter End Notes

one more chapter to go :')

thank you all so much for going along with me on this journey, and i'll see you one last time on sunday <3

(also, note the fact that there's now a series - i'm not done with this verse after sunday, yall, don't worry :D)

home

Chapter Summary

The best part, they find, is learning what it's like to live with each other again.

Chapter Notes

here we go, one last time :')

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“You kept them?”

Ranboo glances up to see Tommy leaning against the doorframe. He's got a small smile on his face. “Course I did,” Ranboo answers, closing the box, stuffed full with post-its and flower petals, and placing it back on his desk. He turns and opens his arms, and Tommy nestles between them before long. “You guys put a lot of effort into those,” Ranboo murmurs into Tommy's hair. “Of course I wouldn't get rid of them.”

“Sap,” Tommy says, muffled by Ranboo's shirt. Ranboo snorts.

“Like you're one to talk,” Ranboo retorts in amusement. Tommy just smacks his hand against Ranboo's chest.

Tommy says, “Don't patronize me.” He leans back, eyes glinting. He looks happy.

Ranboo can't hold back his own grin. “I would never,” he says, like a liar. Tommy rolls his eyes, but doesn't respond, instead leaning back and grabbing Ranboo's hand.

“C'mon,” he urges, pulling Ranboo forward. “I think Phil and Wilbur just got here to help us start unpacking.” Ranboo casts a glance towards the too-many boxes still laying around the room.

“Alright,” he says, turning away. He follows Tommy downstairs, and his chest warms at the way Wilbur beams as soon as his eyes land on Ranboo. Wilbur gives Tubbo, currently wrapped up in his arms, one final squeeze before he releases him. Tubbo instantly launches himself at Phil; Ranboo laughs a bit at the way Phil stumbles, cursing. It doesn't help that Tommy accosts them immediately after.

“Ranboo!”

Ranboo's grin widens as Wilbur walks up to him. "Hi, Wilbur," he greets. Wilbur shakes his head, coming in front of Ranboo and peering up at him.

"Damn, you really are tall, huh," Wilbur comments, looking Ranboo up and down. Ranboo snorts a bit.

"Yeah, I am," he replies. "Honestly, this is way better than I had to deal with before." Ranboo hangs his head a bit. "The doors were always far too small," he says mournfully. Wilbur cackles, hunching over slightly.

"Oh, I can imagine," Wilbur says, wiping an amused tear from his eye. "Stupid enderman. Must suck being a beanpole."

Ranboo complains, "Hey! It's not my fault I was tall!" He narrows his eyes at Wilbur. "And it's not like you're one to talk, you're only an inch shorter than me!"

"Yeah, but I wasn't over nine feet tall in a different life," Wilbur says dryly. Finally, he opens his arms, and Ranboo perks up. "Now c'mere, I want my hug." Ranboo hesitates for only a second, but then slots himself against Wilbur. Wilbur's a little shorter than him. He still goes under Wilbur's arms, though, wrapping his arms around Wilbur's back. Wilbur chuckles a bit, arms going around his shoulders.

Wilbur's warm. Ranboo eases into the hug quickly, and Wilbur ruffles the back of Ranboo's hair. "Hey there," Wilbur murmurs. His voice has suddenly grown so *tender*, and Ranboo *will* cry. Ender, he's wanted this for so *long*.

He's in the UK to stay, now, with the majority of his friends and his family by his side. It doesn't feel real yet. But Wilbur's here, alongside so many others, and they're not going to get ripped away. They're not gonna leave.

It's more than Ranboo could've ever hoped for.

Ranboo pulls away first after a moment, and the smile Wilbur meets him with is warm. "Ready to unpack your ridiculous amount of stuff?" Wilbur says. Ranboo sighs, shoulders slumping.

"I don't even have that much stuff," he says despairingly. "Tubbo and Tommy have way more!"

"Yeah, but they can move their stuff here in stages, not all at once," Phil interjects, walking over. Ranboo sighs, but turns to greet him and Phil quickly tugs him into a hug. "Hey there, mate," Phil says. Ranboo ducks his head so that it rests on Phil's shoulder.

"Hi," he echoes back, a little shy. Phil laughs a bit, pulling back and patting Ranboo on the shoulder.

"It's good to see you," he says genuinely. Ranboo nods; even though they saw each other a couple of days ago, it still feels like forever.

"You too," he responds. Phil grins at him. He looks around a bit.

“This is a nice place you have here,” he comments. Tubbo perks up.

“Thanks! I picked it!”

Tommy jerks his head over from where he’s hugging Wilbur. “I helped!” He complains.

“Yeah, well I found it first!”

“We were *both* searching!”

“I still found it!”

“Oh, shut the fuck up.”

“Alright!” Wilbur claps his hands together to interrupt them – well, claps the best he can when he still has Tommy attached to him like a barnacle. He shoots Tommy and Tubbo both a fondly exasperated look, then says. “Let’s get started!”

Ranboo bounces a little on his toes in excitement, and eagerly follows Wilbur further into the house.

-

“Tommy, if you shove me into this lake, I *will* kick the shit out of you.”

Tommy just laughs at Jack’s threat. “You’re really not all that scary, Jack,” Tommy teases back. And man, does it feel good to say that and know that Jack isn’t gonna, you know, try to murder him. Instead, Jack just glares. Tommy can see the laughter dancing in his eyes, though, and so he just nudges Jack in the shoulder teasingly.

“Don’t test me,” Jack repeats threateningly. Tommy sighs and rolls his eyes.

“I *suppose* you can live another day without getting soaked,” Tommy concedes. He’s grinning, though. Jack’s doing a bad job at hiding his own snickers. Tommy *missed* having this sort of relationship with Jack- they’d been close, before everything happened in the *before*. But then things had gone to shit, and Jack suddenly wanted to kill him.

Here, though, Jack’s quickly becoming one of his best friends. They bounce off each other ridiculously easily, and Jack also *cares*, so, so deeply. He hides it under a layer of sass, but Tommy knows him. He knows Jack cares.

“Wow, thank you,” Jack says sarcastically. He turns away from the water, waiting for Tommy to catch up to him before starting to walk back along the dock to the car. “So what movie do you wanna go watch?” Jack asks. Tommy hums, before shrugging.

“Dunno. What do you wanna watch?”

“I dunno- that’s why I asked *you*!”

“Just like you, to leave the hard decisions to *me*,” Tommy teases. Predictably, Jack rears up.

“I’m being *polite*, letting you decide! This is a gift!”

“You just don’t want to have to think of anything.”

“Shut up.”

“Truly quite lazy of you, Jack Manifold.”

“Shut *up!*”

“I’m going to tweet about you and say how lazy you are-”

Jack shoves Tommy off the dock and into the water. Tommy resurfaces, spluttering.

“Jack, you *asshole!*”

Jack laughs, throwing his head back. “It needed to be done,” he says, eyes twinkling. He reaches a hand down to help Tommy back up. “Here, I have towels in the car, you’ll be fine-”

Tommy pulls him into the water with him. The memory of Jack’s yelp of surprise is going to be a source of joy to Tommy for much time to come.

-

“Tubbo- don’t do that, Tubbo!”

Tubbo flashes Niki an innocent grin, laughing at the mild panic on Niki’s face. “Niki, I know how to cook. Don’t you trust me?” He asks teasingly, flipping another pancake. It falls lopsided back onto the pan. Niki sighs, shoving her face into her hand.

“You’re even worse than Tommy is,” she says despairingly. “And he’s also absolutely *terrible*.”

“I have absolutely no idea what you mean,” Tubbo grins. He flips another pancake. It goes up, up, up, and-

Onto Niki’s head.

Tubbo freezes, eyes locked on the batter slowly trailing down Niki’s forehead. “Aha,” he says slowly. He carefully places the pan back onto the stove, glancing nervously at the camera capturing the video before he looks back at Niki. She- isn’t fuming, but she doesn’t look happy. At all.

“Tubbo,” she starts, carefully lifting the pancake up and wiping batter away from her eyes. Tubbo backs up away from her.

He looks back at the camera, and tries to hide the panic in his voice as he says, “Now, everyone, this is what you call a tactical retreat!”

With that, he vaults over the counter and bolts into the next room. “Tubbo!” Niki calls, and Tubbo just runs further.

He doesn’t make it far until she catches him. Tubbo screeches as Niki grabs the back of his shirt. “I’m sorry!” He laughs, turning back towards her. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to!”

Niki gives him an unimpressed look. Tubbo shrinks a little, rubbing the back of his head sheepishly. “I really am sorry,” he says a little quieter. Niki stares at him for a moment more, before she sighs.

“I know you didn’t mean to,” she finally says, letting go of his shirt. “Just- please listen to me when I say not to do stuff like that?” She asks. Tubbo nods vigorously.

“Yes, ma’am!” He says, saluting.

Niki coughs. “Never call me ma’am again,” she tells him. Tubbo salutes her again.

“Yes, your highness!”

“That is really- that’s really not better, Tubbo.”

“My liege!”

“Now you’re just reaching.”

“Your majesty!”

Niki’s laughing, now, and Tubbo relaxes. “You’re absolutely *ridiculous*,” she says fondly, dragging him out of the room. “Now, let’s go get back to the video before Tommy swoops in and does something to the camera.”

Tommy’s yell is faint, but audible. “Too late!” He crows. Tubbo shakes his head and sighs.

“Yeah, let’s get back there.”

When they get back, instead of the camera being screwed up, Tommy swoops in and hands a couple of eggs to Niki. “Here you go!” he chirps. Niki flashes him a grin.

“Perfect, Tommy, thank you.”

And, savagely, right in front of the camera, Niki slams the eggs down on Tubbo’s head.

Tubbo just stands there, for a moment. Slowly, he brings a hand up to brush the trailing wetness away from his eyes. “...I guess I did deserve that,” he mutters.

Niki laughs at him, eyes twinkling. Tommy throws an arm over her shoulder and laughs, too.

-

It’s good, getting closer and closer to these people who, in another life entirely, were dangerous. It’s good, singing with Wilbur and bugging Phil and talking with Techno; baking

with Niki and goofing off with Jack and just having *fun*.

Streaming keeps on being fun. They laugh when taunting people with the fact that they moved in together, and flush as Wilbur tells them again and again how incredible they are. They have nightmares, sometimes; their memories overwhelming them some days, but they never linger.

They have each other.

-

The best part, they find, is learning what it's like to live with each other again.

-

"Mornin'," Tommy grumbles, stumbling into a seat and faceplanting into the table. Tubbo gives him an amused look.

"Morning, sleepyhead," he says lightly. He grabs a mug from the cabinet, pouring coffee into it with just a bit of creamer before he slides it in front of Tommy. Tommy gives him a vaguely grateful look, and downs half of it in a second.

"Ranboo streaming?" He asks. Tubbo nods.

"Yeah."

Tommy groans, resting his head on his arms again. "I'll never understand how he can just stream right after he wakes up," he grumbles. Tubbo snorts.

"Just 'cause you're not an early riser doesn't mean none of us are," Tubbo teases. Without a word, he refills Tommy's mug. "Ranboo's always been like this, y'know."

Shaking his head, Tommy mumbles, "Yeah. He's always been stupidly productive." A pause, and then Tommy asks, "What're we doing today?"

Tubbo shrugs. "Well, Ranboo still hasn't finished unpacking," he says dryly. Tommy sighs.

"It's been a month," he complains. "He needs to get off his ass and finish already." Tubbo stifles his snickers.

"You could help him, y'know," Tubbo tells him, as if he doesn't know that Tommy would drop everything to do as Ranboo asks. Tommy wrinkles his brows as if the very thought is disgusting. Hypocrite, Tubbo thinks fondly.

"*You* could help him," Tommy mocks.

"You both are horrible." Both of them look up, and Tubbo blinks as Ranboo steps into the kitchen. He ruffles Tommy's hair casually, snickering a bit at his indignant yelp. "I literally have one box left to unpack," Ranboo says dryly, taking the cup of hot chocolate that Tubbo hands him with a nod of thanks. Tubbo smiles back, and headbutts him briefly in greeting.

Tommy grins tiredly up at him, and says, “That’s one box too many!” Ranboo just sighs and rolls his eyes.

“Your stream over?” Tubbo asks. Ranboo nods, sipping at his cocoa.

“Yeah, it was just a quick alt stream. I wanted to spend time with you guys.” Tubbo smiles up at him.

Tommy asks excitedly, “Movie day?” Ranboo laughs.

“Yeah, sure, sounds good.”

They watch movies all day, making popcorn. Tommy makes a game out of trying to throw popcorn so that it hits characters’ mouths while they’re talking, which cracks Tubbo up *far* too easily. Ranboo just sighs, acting exasperated, but there’s always more popcorn ready when Tommy runs out.

Tubbo falls asleep midway through with his head on Ranboo’s shoulder to the sound of Tommy’s shouts and Ranboo’s chuckles.

He wakes up to the sound of Tommy snoring in his ear. A blanket’s been thrown over them.

Tubbo falls back asleep, content.

-

“Tubbo!”

Ranboo pokes his head into Tubbo’s streaming room – they all have their own separate rooms, both for streaming and for sleeping, but inevitably they all end up in the same room every night. Ranboo can’t say he’s surprised. Tubbo’s camera is angled away from the doorway; Tubbo clicks around a bit before he looks up. “What’s up, bossman?” He asks.

“Have you seen-” Ranboo pauses, looking Tubbo up and down. Then he sighs, shaking his head. “Never mind,” he says. Tubbo furrows his brows.

“What?” He questions, confused. Ranboo leans against the doorway, his faint annoyance fading into amusement.

“I was looking for my hoodie,” Ranboo answers. “Was wondering if you’ve seen it.” He gestures towards Tubbo, and says dryly, “Obviously you have.”

Tubbo’s eyes light up. “Oh, yeah!” Bringing his arms around his torso in a self-hug, Tubbo beams up at him. “It’s comfy!” He exclaims. “And it’s warm!”

Ranboo shakes his head, but can’t stop himself from grinning fondly. “You really love my hoodies, huh,” he asks rhetorically. “Seriously, between you and Tommy, I’m gonna have no hoodies left by the end of the month.”

Tubbo shrugs, looking unrepentant. “They’re warm!” He says again. Ranboo just exhales and makes to leave the room.

“Yeah, yeah, alright. You can wear it.” Tubbo’s smile grows even wider. Ranboo turns away, but pauses, glancing over his shoulder. “Don’t forget to have lunch,” he reminds. Tubbo blinks.

“Right, yeah, that’s a thing.” Tubbo thinks for a moment, before he glances hesitantly at his computer. “I’ll be down in a bit,” he says tentatively. Ranboo shakes his head. This is why he checks – Tubbo has an awful habit of forgetting to eat while he streams. He’s never done it to the point of worrying them, but both Tommy and Ranboo make a point to help him anyway.

“I’ll bring it up,” he reassures. Tubbo looks relieved.

Tubbo says, “Thanks, Boo.” He shifts so that he’s facing his camera again. Ranboo flashes him a smile.

“Yeah, no problem. I’ll be up in a bit, ‘kay?”

“‘Kay!”

-

Tommy wakes to something in the bed shifting. Groggily, he cracks his eyes open, and his eyes dart around the room, searching for the disturbance. Predictably, it’s Ranboo shifting around, creeping carefully towards the door.

“Where’re ‘ou goin’?” Tommy asks tiredly, rubbing at his eyes. Ranboo glances back, looking apologetic.

“Sorry for waking you,” he whispers. “I couldn’t sleep, so I was gonna go watch Phil’s stream for a bit to hopefully tire myself out.”

Tommy starts dragging himself out of bed. Tubbo grumbles something, but when Tommy glances over he just rolls over and snores into the pillow. Tommy snorts softly, swinging his legs out of bed. “I’ll come with,” Tommy says. Ranboo gives him a look.

“Tommy, you look like you’ll fall asleep at any second,” Ranboo says quietly, amusement tinging his words. “You don’t have to come with me just ‘cause I’m awake.”

“Don’ care,” Tommy responds immediately. He stumbles over to Ranboo’s side and faceplants into his upper-arm. Ranboo sighs and wraps an arm around Tommy’s shoulders in response. “Wan’ spend time with you,” Tommy mumbles. Ranboo lets out a huff of breath, before Tommy feels a kiss pressed to the crown of his head.

“You’re just gonna end up falling asleep on me,” Ranboo tells him softly, leading them both from the room. Tommy shrugs.

He says, “Maybe. If your shoulder’s comfy enough.”

“Does my shoulder’s comfort level change on a day-to-day basis?”

“On the hourly, even.”

“Wow, that must be inconvenient for you,” Ranboo laughs. Tommy nods, rubbing at his eyes again.

“*So* inconvenient, you don’t even know,” Tommy says. He glances up to see Ranboo shake his head.

They arrive in the living room. Ranboo shoves Tommy down gently, telling him, “Sit. I’ll make some hot cocoa.”

“No whip!” Tommy calls. Ranboo rolls his eyes.

“I know, Tommy, don’t worry. You’ll get only marshmallows and none of the sweet goodness, don’t worry.”

Tommy grins up at him. “Thanks, Ranboob.” He stifles snickers at the sound of Ranboo’s groan.

“Never mind, you’re only getting whipped cream. No chocolate, just whipped cream.”

“No,” Tommy whines, drawn out. Ranboo just laughs.

Ranboo’s only a few minutes, but Tommy’s almost fully slumped into the couch by the time he gets back. Ranboo snorts softly when he sees him. “You really should’ve just stayed in bed,” Ranboo tells him dryly, handing him his hot chocolate. Sure enough, there’re only marshmallows in it. Tommy gives him a sleepy smile in thanks, slurping up a good chunk of the mug. Ranboo always takes care to make it the perfect temperature for Tommy, even though he himself loves his cocoa boiling hot.

“Now I have hot cocoa, though,” Tommy mumbles. “Life is good.”

Ranboo huffs out a laugh. “Uh-huh,” he says. “I’m sure.” Ranboo finally sits down, and Tommy takes no time to tip over and rest his head on Ranboo’s shoulder. Ranboo slips down the slightest amount, making the angle less awkward on Tommy’s neck.

“Jus’ start Phil’s stream,” Tommy mumbles, already falling asleep again. He sips tiredly at the remaining hot chocolate. Ranboo does what he asks, putting the stream on low volume. Phil’s voice is soothing, as always, and Tommy grins a little when Ranboo types something in chat and Phil responds with a warm, “Good morning, Ranboo, Tommy.”

“Mornin’, Phil,” Tommy says quietly. Ranboo snickers a little. Tommy’s eyes slip shut a moment after, his mind growing foggy. He faintly feels the mug be slipped carefully from his fingers, and Ranboo adjust so his arm’s wrapped around Tommy’s shoulders, Tommy’s head pillowed on his chest.

Tommy falls back asleep to the feeling of fingers running gently through his hair, warm.

-

Tubbo grins at the sight of Tommy sitting at the piano. He's not playing anything, yet, flipping through the booklets of sheet music they have propped on the piano. Tubbo makes his way over, wrapping his arms around Tommy's chest from behind.

Tommy barely startles, glancing up and over his shoulder. "Hi," Tommy greets, giving Tubbo a grin. Tubbo smiles back, pulling Tommy against his chest. Tommy goes willingly, leaning all his weight against Tubbo.

"Hey," Tubbo replies, peering over Tommy's shoulder. Tommy looks back down, going back to flipping through pages. "Watcha playing?"

Tommy shrugs. He puts the music aside and presses his hands absently down on the keys, playing a mindless tune. "Not sure yet," he answers. Tubbo squeezes him close to his chest in a hug briefly before he lets go, sliding onto the bench beside Tommy. Tommy accommodates for him, sliding over.

Tubbo places his own hands on the keys, and starts to play *Your New Boyfriend*. Tommy takes a moment to place the tune, but laughs soon after. "Oh hell yeah," Tommy grins, starting to play the same tune, only a couple octaves higher. It honestly sounds really funny, but Tubbo just *revels* in the feeling of playing with his best friend.

They make their way through the entirety of Wilbur's songs, and then some of Lovejoy's. He's sure their belting is echoing through the house – it's not the same huge mansion they had before, after all – but Tubbo doesn't care. It doesn't matter, anyway- it's theirs, now. They can do whatever they want. No one's going to stop them.

(A couple of rooms away, Ranboo nudges one of his headphones off. "Yup, that's sure them," he comments, laughing softly. He glances at chat, and says, "Welp, chat, enjoy your free Tommy-and-Tubbo-singing-Wilbur-songs hours.")

Chat seems utterly delighted. Ranboo continues playing, his heart soft.

Ender, he'd do anything to hear his best friends be this happy for the rest of their lives.)

Eventually, they hit a lull. Tubbo debates for a moment on what to play while Tommy returns to flipping through the sheet music. A thought occurs quickly enough, though, and Tubbo lets his shoulders slump. He nudges Tommy.

Tommy glances at him, eyebrows raised. Tubbo just gives him a smaller, more melancholy smile, and starts playing. "*I heard there was a special place,*" he begins softly. Tommy's eyes grow soft.

"*Where men could go and emancipate,*" he picks up seamlessly. They're quieter, now, singing the whole of the Anthem all the way through. This song- it doesn't hurt, like it did when they first sang it, all that time ago. It aches a little bit, but Tubbo just finds himself reminiscing on the fun times; on the times he was happy in L'Manberg, instead of sad.

He remembers what he has now, and he can't help but feel lighter.

Tommy sounds the same way. Tubbo glances up at him, and his eyes are closed, his head swaying slightly from side to side as he sings. Tubbo leans his head against Tommy's shoulder; Tommy opens his eyes and looks down, and when the song ends, he wraps Tubbo's hand in his.

They don't say anything. Tubbo just lets his eyes flutter shut, focusing on the sound of Tommy's breaths. Tommy returns to playing after a moment, releasing Tubbo's hand and pressing softly down on the keys. The songs Tommy chooses are soothing. Unobtrusive.

Tubbo can't help but nod off, right there next to his best friend.

-

Tommy walks into the room to the sound of his best friends screaming at each other.

"No- you don't get to just *hog-*"

"I can do whatever the *fuck* I want, you don't get to tell me what to do-"

"He's my best friend!"

"He's *mine*, too!"

"Yeah, well, I've known him for longer!"

"That doesn't mean a *single* thing! I love him just as much!"

"Yeah, I *know*, but it's the principle of the thing!"

"Oh come *on-*"

"What the hell is going on in here?!" Tommy breaks in, incredulous. Tubbo and Ranboo both spin on him, equally frustrated looks on their faces.

"This dickhead-" Tubbo stabs a finger towards Ranboo- "Is trying to encroach on the natural order of things!"

"You're being ridiculous!" Ranboo shoots back. Tommy's gratified to see that at least, neither of them look downright *angry*, but they sure as hell look annoyed. "I have *just as much of a right-*"

"Right to *what?*" Tommy asks, getting more irritated at not getting a straight answer. He crosses his arms, raising his eyebrows. Tubbo lets out a huff of breath.

"Right. So. Me and Ranboo decided to get married again, and-"

Tommy blinks. "Wait, wait, wait," Tommy interjects, holding up his hands. He looks between the two, eyes wide. "What do you fucking mean *get married again?* When did this happen?"

“Like twenty minutes ago,” Tubbo waves off. He shoots an annoyed look at Ranboo. “And *Ranboo* decided to be a bitch and argue against what’s *obviously* right.” Ranboo rolls his eyes.

“He’s being *unreasonable*,” Ranboo stresses. Tommy takes in a deep breath, willing himself patience, because *ender* does he need it right now.

“I need one of you to tell me what the fuck you’re fighting over like, now, before I start stabbing shit,” Tommy warns. Gratifyingly, both of them flush the slightest bit.

Tubbo rubs the back of his head. “Right,” he laughs a little, sheepish. “Right, uh- Tommy, you’re my best friend, right?”

Tommy blinks. “Yeah?”

“But you’re also mine?” Ranboo cuts in, shooting Tubbo a look. Tubbo glares at him. Tommy’s just getting more and more confused.

“I mean, yeah-”

“But I met you *first*, so you should *obviously* be my best man-”

Tommy blinks.

Oh. So this is what this is about.

Ranboo whines, looking seconds from stomping his foot, “But he’s my best friend, too!”

Tubbo sticks his tongue out. “I don’t care! Go ask Wilbur!”

Tommy just stares, for a moment, mind slowly combing through the new information he now has. Ranboo and Tubbo are getting closer and closer to yelling at each other again, and all he can do is just look at them.

He breathes out slowly, shaking his head. “You two,” he starts, crossing his arms and giving them a deadpan look, “Are absolute morons.” Despite his words, Tommy can’t stop himself from feeling ridiculously, overwhelmingly fond of these two idiots of his.

They both spin on him, mouths open as if to defend their non-existent honor. Tommy raises a hand and stops them in their tracks. “So. You two are getting married again,” Tommy confirms. Both of them nod. “And you’re fighting over who gets to have me as best man?”

“Yes,” Tubbo says firmly. Ranboo nods, crossing his arms.

Tommy sighs.

“Who says you can’t both have me?” They both blink at him. Tommy exhales, and says, “Guys, this is gonna be, like, the most untraditional wedding ever. What are you guys even planning for it?”

Ranboo and Tubbo share a look. “We haven’t really...gotten that far,” Ranboo answers slowly.

“This was the first thing we talked about,” Tubbo adds on. Tommy steps closer and, sighing, places his hands on both of their shoulders.

“You two are absolute idiots,” he tells them solemnly. His smile quirks up, and before they can express their indignance, Tommy adds on, “Good thing you have me, then.”

He allows the warmth in his heart to win for a moment, and yanks them into a hug. “We’re gonna give you guys the best damn second wedding you could ever ask for,” he vows quietly.

Tubbo and Ranboo just hug him back, and Tommy smiles.

-

Tubbo honestly hadn’t really known what to expect from a wedding – their wedding in the *before* hadn’t really been a wedding, more of a really sweet picnic, where Ranboo had asked and Tubbo had accepted, and then the hastily-planned trip to the courthouse to get the official paperwork. Tommy had the good sense, this time, to bring in Phil and Wilbur to help them figure it out.

After they’d gotten over their initial shock and were convinced that yes, Tubbo and Ranboo know what they’re doing, and yes, they do want this, Phil and Wilbur been a great help. Phil knew what they needed to do on the official side, and Wilbur decided to take it upon himself to drag Tommy away and help them plan the actual wedding.

They haven’t told Tubbo *anything* about it, just telling him that they have it handled. Tubbo’s half convinced that the altar is gonna be in the shape of a penis.

Ranboo and Tubbo had decided pretty much immediately that they don’t want to have a wedding that’s super elaborate. That’s never really been their thing – Tubbo just wants to be married to Ranboo, he doesn’t care about how they dress or what music is playing or any of that. All he cares about is that Ranboo be there, and all their friends be there, and that Tubbo gets to slip the ring onto Ranboo’s finger and hug him and express, once again, just how committed he is to his husband.

Tubbo could tell that Ranboo was getting a bit nervous once they’d started planning. Before he could start stressing and asking Wilbur and Tommy about everything and focusing on making it all perfect, like Tubbo knows Ranboo was almost definitely going to start doing, Tubbo’d sat him down. “Hey,” he’d murmured, pressing his forehead to Ranboo’s. “Remember that even if something goes wrong, it won’t ruin this for me, alright? We’re doing this to be married, not for the music or anything like that.”

He’d held his position against Ranboo until he’d felt Ranboo’s shoulders slump, Ranboo letting out an exhale at the same time. “Right. Thanks,” he’d responded. Tubbo’d flicked his eyes up to meet Ranboo’s. Ranboo looked achingly soft, and Tubbo almost wanted to *cry* with the gentleness of the kiss Ranboo’d pressed to his forehead. “I’ll remember,” Ranboo promised. “Don’t worry.”

“Good,” Tubbo’d whispered.

The day of the wedding comes quicker than Tubbo expected.

Tommy wakes him up that morning with a bright grin on his face. “Wakey wakey, bee boy!” He says cheerfully, dragging the covers off of Tubbo. Tubbo groans, shoving his face back into the pillows.

“Go ‘way,” he mumbles.

“Nope!” Tommy chirps. Tubbo yelps as he’s pushed from behind, and then unceremoniously shoved off of the bed. He sits up, glaring mulishly at Tommy.

“I hate you,” he tells him. Tommy grins.

“I know! Now, c’mon, we’ve gotta get started. I’ve already gotten Ranboo ready, so we’re just waiting on you.”

Tubbo sits up straight, eyes widening and focusing on Tommy. “Wedding,” he says, suddenly gone breathless. Tommy’s smile grows softer.

“Wedding,” Tommy repeats. He reaches out a hand towards Tubbo. “You ready?”

Tubbo takes his hand. “Am I ever,” he grins.

And Tubbo doesn’t think he’s been more excited for an event in his entire life.

-

Ranboo gapes at their living room. Or, at least, what used to be their living room.

He turns, wide-eyed, to stare at Wilbur. “You guys did this?” He breathes. Wilbur nods, grinning and sweeping an arm across the room.

“Yup! You like it?” he asks. Ranboo lets out a disbelieving laugh.

“Do I *like* it?”

Their living room has been utterly transformed. There’s an altar up at the front, thankfully not in the shape of a penis, with balloons surrounding it. There’s a table off to the side, probably meant for food, and a row of chairs separated by an aisle. The chairs all have the faces of their friends who they can’t tell about the wedding posted on them – Ranboo’s personal favorite is Jack’s *incredibly* non-flattering one. And- from the ceiling, there’s hundreds upon hundreds of flowers, and little streamers with charms of all sorts hanging down. Birds, and fish, and of course, tens upon tens of bees.

There’s a banner that says *Congratulations Tubbo and Ranboo!* on it, and the pure *care* that’s been threaded throughout this whole thing has Ranboo in awe.

Instead of answering Wilbur's question, he turns and burrows into him, shoving his face into Wilbur's chest and wrapping his arms around his back. Wilbur's chuckles rumble through his chest. His arms coming around Ranboo's shoulders, he says, "You deserve it, Ranboo."

Ranboo snuffles. Wilbur presses a light kiss to Ranboo's hair, and whispers, "You deserve the world. You and Tubbo both."

"Thank you, Wil," Ranboo says into Wilbur's chest. Wilbur squeezes him just a little tighter.

"Course," he says. "Anytime."

And Ranboo knows it's true.

-

Tubbo's just about to put on his suit when the doorbell rings.

His eyebrows furrow, and he glances over at Wilbur. Wilbur just shrugs, his poker face carefully controlled. "I dunno who it is," Wilbur says casually, just like a liar would say. He jerks his head towards the door. "Go on," he encourages. At that moment, Ranboo gets shoved out of the room adjacent to them. Tubbo brightens, forgetting his annoyance – he hasn't seen Ranboo yet today.

Ranboo's eyes light up when he notices Tubbo, and Tubbo quickly dashes over, burrowing under his arm and giving him a side-hug. "Hi," he greets.

"Hey," Ranboo responds. Tommy comes out of the room too, looking annoyed. Phil follows him soon after.

"Phil, Wil- what's happening?" He whines. Phil and Wilbur just share a secretive look.

"Nothing," Phil answers. He's barely hiding a grin. "Why don't you go save whoever's waiting at the door?"

Tubbo shares a look with the other two. Tommy's the one that finally shrugs, stalking towards the door. "Let's get this over with," he grumbles lightly, turning the doorknob and yanking. The door opens, and Tommy instantly freezes.

His body's blocking Tubbo's view, so Tubbo makes his way over, leaving Ranboo behind, and peeks around him. Similar to Tommy, Tubbo stills. He faintly feels his eyes going wide.

"Hullo," fucking *Technoblade* waves, standing on their porch. *Techno* is on their *porch*. In *England*! "I heard a couple of my favorite gremlins were getting married," he says casually, sticking his hands in his pockets. "So I figured I'd make my way over-"

Tubbo's the first to shake himself out of his shock, and cuts Techno off, launching himself at him. Tommy and then Ranboo, Tubbo would assume, quickly follow, crashing against Tubbo's back. Techno lets out a faint groan, but wraps his arms around them.

They just stand there, hugging, for a while. Eventually, though, they all lean back. Techno rubs his chest, taking in a couple of breaths. Tubbo smiles widely up at him. “Hi!” He says brightly. “You’re here!”

“You’re *here!*” Tommy echoes, tone disbelieving. Ranboo’s suspiciously silent, and when Tubbo glances up at him, he’s wiping away his tears. Tubbo grabs his hand and smiles up at him. Ranboo snuffles a bit and squeezes.

Techno shrugs, smiling softly. “I wanted to be here,” he says quietly. And then, even quieter: “I missed you.”

Tubbo’s eyes well with tears, and he lunges in quickly to swallow Techno in another hug, followed by Tommy and Ranboo soon enough.

-

When Ranboo sees Tubbo walking down the aisle, his heart nearly stops.

He’s not dressed in anything ridiculously special. He’s in a suit, of course, but his hair’s as wild as ever, and his tie is patterned with bees. Ranboo normally would have to suppress a laugh at how fitting it is for him.

But- Tubbo’s walking with Wilbur, arms linked together – they’d decided to save getting married officially until later – though Phil did get them all of the paperwork – because as much as Tubbo and Ranboo’s parents both are incredibly supportive, Ranboo’s not sure they would’ve gone for them getting married at seventeen. And so Wilbur walks Tubbo down the aisle, and Phil stands with Ranboo, Techno on the other side. Tommy stands between Ranboo and where Tubbo’s going to be. All of them are there for both of them; Ranboo half suspects that their placement is for aesthetic reasons and nothing else.

Tubbo arrives at the altar. Wilbur presses a kiss to his forehead, whispering, “I’m so proud of you.” Tubbo blinks rapidly for a moment, and Ranboo snuffles as Wilbur leans forward and does the same to Ranboo. Ranboo smiles shakily at Wilbur, before he reaches out and threads his fingers through Tubbo’s.

He smiles, and steps closer. Tommy claps his hands.

“Alright! We’re skipping all the formalities – they’re mostly romantic, anyway, which- gross. No. So, Tubso, my man, you go first with your vows.”

Ranboo snickers a bit at Tommy’s casual statements, locking eyes with Tubbo. Tubbo grins up at him. “Ranboo my beloved,” he starts. “When I met you, you were timid as fuck.” Ranboo can’t help but snort.

“Thanks, Tubbo,” he says dryly. Tubbo’s grin widens.

“Just calling it as I see it! You were nervous whenever we talked to each other – honestly, I saw you yelling back-and-forth Tommy from the very beginning, so it was probably because of me being president, which kinda makes sense, honestly.” Tubbo shakes his head briefly,

and continues, “My point is- I didn’t really get to know you, for a while after we first met. You were amazing to work with, and I quickly learned that I could trust you with my life.”

Tubbo’s voice softens. “But, later on, I actually started to get to know you. I learned that you’re incredibly easy to startle, but just as easy to make laugh. You give the *best* hugs, and even with your memory issues the first time around, you always made sure to keep track of my favorite foods. You *care*, more than pretty much everyone else has.”

Ranboo snuffles, and detangles their hands briefly to swipe at his eyes. Tubbo’s smile quirks up a bit, and he says softer, “You’re always the first to doubt yourself, when I’ve never once doubted you for a second. You’re so loving, so caring, and you’ve inspired me so much.” Ranboo chokes up, bowing his head and closing his eyes. Tubbo whispers, “I love you, Boo, and I’m so thankful to have you as my husband.”

“...Ender, Tubbo,” Ranboo chokes out. He breathes out shakily, and presses their foreheads together. “I have- I have *no* idea how I’m supposed to follow that.”

“Well, you have to!” Tommy breaks in. He’s clearly going for teasing, but the wetness in his voice kind of ruins that. Ranboo chuckles, before he sobers up, growing serious.

“Tubbo Underscore,” Ranboo begins. He looks directly into Tubbo’s eyes. “You are one of the most *incredible* men I’ve ever had the pleasure to meet. I met you in- in arguably, the worst period of your life, and you’ve always been ridiculously inspiring to me.”

Tubbo bows his head, blushing. Ranboo pushes on. “You’re kind. You’re caring. You’re loving. You’re funny. You’re ridiculously, endlessly strong, and always someone I know I can lean on. You’re an incredible singer and while not being good at dancing, *really* fun to dance with, and you help me grow every single day.”

Tubbo lets out a hitched breath. Ranboo brings a hand up to brush it through Tubbo’s bangs, and murmurs, “You’re always ready to provide comfort when someone needs it. You’re just- amazing, Tubbo, and there’s no one else I’d love more to call my husband.” He lowers his voice even more, and whispers fiercely, “I love you, Bee, more than you’ll ever know.”

Sniffling, Tubbo wraps his arms around Ranboo’s middle. Ranboo pulls him close, pressing a kiss into his hair.

When Ranboo glances around, no one’s eyes are dry.

Tommy steps forward, then, and clears his throat. “Well, first off, you both suck for making me cry,” Tommy says wetly, to the amusement of pretty much everyone, Ranboo included. “Second off-” Tommy holds out his hands, with a little ring pillow on it. “Go ahead and put these back on each other.”

Ranboo carefully takes Tubbo’s ring from the pillow; Tubbo does the same. “Now, uh, when you do it, you’ll be married. So do it.”

“Who let him lead this?!” Wilbur calls from the audience. Ranboo can’t help but burst out laughing, and Tubbo does the same, snickering and eyeing Tommy.

“Shut up, bitch!” Tommy retorts. His eyes land back on Ranboo and Tubbo, eyes slightly red. “Well?” He asks, voice gone soft.

Ranboo looks down and takes Tubbo’s hand. Slowly, gently, he slides the ring onto Tubbo’s ring finger. Tubbo’s breath hitches, staring down as Ranboo adjusts the ring. Ranboo leans down, pressing a kiss to the ring.

Tubbo does the same, tenderly sliding Ranboo’s ring back on. It feels right. “There you go,” Tubbo whispers, kissing the ring as well. He tips his head up to lock eyes with Ranboo. His eyes are glistening. Ranboo blinks, and a couple of tears trail down his cheeks.

Tommy beams at them both. “Congrats! You’re married!” He exclaims.

Tubbo laughs delightedly. He drags Ranboo into a hug and Ranboo holds his head against his chest and he’s *warm* and-

And Ranboo’s home.

-

“Alright, you fuckers, listen up!”

Tubbo winces as Tommy yells from right beside him, clinging his fork against his glass dramatically. “Did you *really* have to yell that loudly?” He complains. “There’s like six of us here!”

Tommy grins innocently down at him. “Yup!” He says cheerfully. Tubbo sighs. Ranboo chuckles a bit, pulling Tubbo to his side.

“That’s Tommy,” Ranboo murmurs, “Always being as loud as physically possible.”

“I heard that!” Tommy shouts. Tubbo elbows him.

“Shut up!”

“No. It’s my time,” Tommy says firmly, eyes sparkling. “I’m best man, which means I now get the privilege of embarrassing you in front of all our dear friends.”

Tubbo sighs. “I have regrets,” he says mournfully. Tommy shakes his head, giving him a look.

“*Anyway*,” he starts, “I’m gonna start with Ranboo. Because I want to.”

“Just get on with it!” Techno heckles. Tommy flips him off.

Just to be annoying, Tubbo bets, Wilbur yells, “You’re taking too long!”

“Shut up!” Tommy barks. He turns towards Ranboo. “Ranboo,” he says. “Ranboob. Ran of the boob. My dear friend.”

“Please stop,” Ranboo interrupts exasperatedly. He’s smiling. Tommy glares at him, but it falls away quickly.

“The first day I met Ranboo, he gave me a flower,” Tommy says casually. “I made fun of him for it, which is a pretty good representation of our relationship, I think.”

“It’s true,” Ranboo laughs. Tommy gives him a grin.

“You have to take the time to get to know him, but Ranboo’s one of the most bothersome people I know. He’s loud when he wants to be, and tells *really* dumb puns. He’s annoying, and never lets me get away with anything, and also quite simply far too tall.” Tommy’s smile softens, then, and Tubbo sees Ranboo brace himself.

“He’s also one of my best friends,” Tommy admits easily. “He’s nice. He’s got this insane ability to twist any joke and make it funny, and as much as I make fun of him for being tall, he’s also the best at giving piggy back rides.” Tommy meets Ranboo’s eyes. “He’s ridiculously supportive. Always has been, from the very first day I met him. He’s insanely loving, and when I was at my lowest point, he was always there for me. I have no doubt that he’s saved me, multiple times.”

Ranboo ducks his head, sniffing. Tommy says softly, “You mean so much to me, Ran. I love you, and there’s absolutely no one else I’d rather marry my best friend.”

Tommy quickly gets yanked into a hug. “You suck,” Ranboo chokes out. Tommy laughs softly, and hugs Ranboo back.

“It’s all true, big man,” he whispers. Tubbo adverts his eyes to give them a moment to themselves.

Soon enough, Ranboo returns to Tubbo’s side. Tubbo slips his hand into Ranboo’s and flashes him a smile. “Your turn,” Ranboo whispers. Tubbo nods and returns to looking at Tommy, bracing himself.

“Tubbo’s an idiot,” Tommy starts. He flashes a grin at Tubbo, who sticks his tongue out at him. “He’s an *idiot*. He’s stupid, and impulsive, and likes fire and bees far too much.” Tommy softens, then, and his eyes focus on Tubbo’s. “He’s also kind, and patient, and far too forgiving of everyone who’s hurt him. He’s supported me through it all and I’d be dead a thousand times over if it weren’t for him.”

Tubbo sniffles, scrubbing his forearm across his eyes. His heart clenches. Tommy continues, tone far, far too affectionate and loving. “He’s my best friend. He’s loved me when no one else has, and is someone who I couldn’t live without. People call us the ‘clingyduo,’ and that’s fitting, because I never want to leave your side again.” Tommy’s smile quirks, and he murmurs, “I love you, Tubbo.”

Choking on a sob, Tubbo launches himself at Tommy. Tommy catches him easily. “I love you too, Tommy,” he whispers into his ear. “You’re the absolute best best friend.” Tommy squeezes him tight.

“I’d better be,” he responds. Tubbo nods against his chest. Tommy adds on teasingly, “You break Ranboo’s heart, though, I’m breaking your legs.” Tubbo lets out a hitched laugh. He leans back, meeting Tommy’s eyes.

“I’m counting on it,” he responds. Tommy grins down at him, his eyes twinkling.

He presses his forehead to Tubbo’s briefly. Tubbo presses back, and closes his eyes for the tiniest moment. “Congrats, you two,” Tommy calls out as he leans back. “Now you get to be just as sickeningly sweet as you’ve always been, but more official, now.”

Wilbur, Phil, and Techno cheer, and Tubbo laughs.

The rest of the day flashes by in a whirlwind of joy. They hang out, all of them, playing UNO and Jackbox and just goofing off together. Phil tells him and Ranboo both a ridiculous number of times how proud he is, and Wilbur must hug them at least fifteen times each. Techno just gives them his soft, fond smile, and Tubbo almost cries every time.

Tommy doesn’t ever leave their side.

Tubbo doesn’t think he’s been this happy in his entire life.

Finally, the night draws to a close. Phil hugs them all tightly, promising, “I’ll be back in a few days.” He claps them on the shoulder, and looks entirely too proud as he says, “You two deserve this, alright? I’m so happy for you.”

Tubbo launches back into the hug. “Thanks for everything, Phil,” he says, choked up. He pulls back, and Phil smiles at him.

“Course, mate,” he says warmly. Tubbo wipes at his eyes before turning towards Techno.

Techno, surprisingly, is the one to pull him into a hug. “I’ll be by tomorrow,” he mutters. “You three aren’t rid of me yet.” Tubbo laughs, squeezing him once before pulling back.

“I’m counting on it,” he says. He passes Techno off to be tackled to the ground by Tommy, and launches at Wilbur.

Wilbur catches him, laughing. There are still tears shining in his eyes. “Congrats, Tubs,” he says. He sounds so *happy*. Tubbo stuffs his face into Wilbur’s chest. “You three deserve to be happy,” he whispers into his hair.

“We are,” Tubbo responds. His cheeks hurt from grinning. “We really are.” Wilbur pulls back and smiles down at him.

“Good,” he says. He ruffles Tubbo’s hair; Tubbo squawks, bringing his hands protectively over his head. Wilbur just laughs. “I’ll see you later, alright?”

“See you later, Wil,” Tubbo says. They wave one more time, shouting their goodbyes, and then it’s just the three of them again.

Silently, Tubbo turns around and burrows into Tommy's chest. "Today was perfect," Tubbo whispers into Tommy's chest. "Thank you so much, Toms."

Tommy pulls him tight to him. He's warm. "No need for thanks," Tommy says affectionately.

"No," Ranboo interjects. Tubbo feels another pair of arms snake around his shoulders from the side. "Tommy, you don't know how much this means to us. *Thank* you."

Tommy's quiet, for a moment. "You're welcome," he finally says. "Love you guys."

"Love you, Tommy," Tubbo echoes instantly. He leans back to give Ranboo a challenging look. "Ha- said it first!"

Ranboo gapes at him. "That doesn't- Tommy, I love you," he hurries to say. Tubbo shakes his head.

"You were late. That means I love him more."

"That's- no! It doesn't!"

"It does," Tubbo sings. Ranboo narrows his eyes.

"It does not. I'm willing to fight you on this."

Tommy's laughter breaks through their argument. Tubbo can't quite stifle his own snickers; soon enough, Ranboo joins them. "You two are ridiculous," Tommy says fondly. He pulls them back into a hug. "I love you."

"Love you! Ha- got it again!"

"Oh my *ender*, Tubbo-"

"Look, I get it, I'm loved, you two can really stop arguing now-"

"Never."

"Oh, *ender*-"

Tubbo laughs, throwing his head back.

He's home.

-

Ranboo wakes up to a shriek of excitement.

"Ranboo! Tommy! Wake the fuck up!"

Tommy groans beside Ranboo. Ranboo wholeheartedly agrees, rolling onto his side and shoving his face into what must be Tommy's shoulder. His hand curls into Tommy's shirt; the arm wrapped around Ranboo's shoulders tightens slightly. "Go 'way," Tommy grumbles.

“No!” Tubbo *rips* the blankets off of them, and Ranboo instantly groans as the cold air washes over him. He snuggles further into Tommy’s warmth, thoroughly ignoring the outside world.

“Fuck *off*,” Tommy exclaims.

Ranboo mumbles, “Seconded!”

“*Guys!* It’s *important!*”

“What’s *important* is my beauty sleep,” Ranboo retorts. And he can’t see Tubbo’s face, but he’d bet he’s rolling his eyes.

“You two are such drama queens,” he complains. Ranboo yelps as the back of his sweatshirt is grabbed, and soon enough, he’s crashing down onto the floor. From the sound of the yelp that rises from the other side of the bed, Tommy’s met the same fate.

“You’re horrible,” he tells Tubbo, finally cracking his eyes open. Tubbo grins brightly at him, ignoring his annoyance.

“You love me!” He chirps. Ranboo rolls his eyes, standing up.

“Yeah, yeah, what’d you want to show us?” Tubbo slips his hand inside Ranboo’s, tugging him towards the window. Ranboo sighs and indulges him, squeezing back when Tubbo grips tighter.

Tommy grumbles something under his breath, definitely including multiple instances of the word *fuck*, but joins them. Tubbo wraps an arm around Tommy’s waist and leans against him; Tommy sighs dramatically but wraps an arm around Tubbo’s shoulders anyway. “You’re a clingy shit,” he tells Tubbo. Tubbo sticks his tongue out at him. Ranboo shakes his head in both fondness and exasperation.

“Anyways- look, guys!” Tubbo exclaims, freeing his arm from around Tommy and pulling the curtain back. Ranboo squints against the brightness, but soon he notices what has Tubbo all excited. Despite himself, he grins.

“It’s snowing,” Tommy breathes, pressing his palms against the window. He leans forward, almost-childlike awe alighting his face. Tubbo bounces on his toes, beaming.

“Yeah! Look at how *much* there is!” He says excitedly. Ranboo laughs.

“There sure is a lot,” he agrees. Tubbo yanks his hand again, wrapping Tommy’s wrist in his other hand.

Impatient, he says, “Well, what’re we waiting for? Let’s go! We can have a snowball fight!”

Ranboo laughs, and follows his best friends out the door.

He can guess what comes next – Tubbo will launch the first snowball at Tommy’s face, Tommy will yell in anger and launch one back, and completely miss. Ranboo will pelt them

both, and within minutes they'll all be covered in snow. Later, cheeks red from cold and laughter both, they'll retreat inside and have hot cocoa next to the fireplace, huddled up next to each other.

They have the rest of their lives to live like this.

Ranboo can't wait.

Chapter End Notes

man.

guys, i don't even know where to start with this a/n. three months ago, i was talking to one of my friends on call and was like "hey, i wanna write a fic not set in the DSMP but about DSMP benchtrio", and i bounced between maybe doing a superhero au or something similar before i remembered that reincarnation is one of my favorite tropes, and all i want in life is for benchtrio to be able to be HAPPY.

thus, this fic was born.

it's just...incredible to me that i've managed to impact so many people. this fic is really important to me, but it seems like i've impacted far more than just me, and i'm endlessly blown away by just how much support i've gotten on this fic. you all are absolutely incredible, and i can't thank you enough for everything. you all are incredible, and whether you've commented on every chapter or simply read and enjoyed; whether you found this at the beginning and stuck around or found this years after i finished, i appreciate you all the same. thank you. and to my friends who have supported me this whole time (you know who you are) thank you so much. i love you <333

there's more coming in this verse, of course! subscribe to the series if you wanna see more - i already have a couple of things written that'll be published within the next couple of weeks, and a couple big ideas that'll hopefully come out (relatively) soon. if you want to see something, feel free to make requests in the comments, though i can't promise it'll get written very quickly if at all given i am a college stem student haha

wow this got super long. if you read this all, thank you again.

i'll see you all later <3

(also. guys, look at that word count. it's so pretty. i love it. okay BYEEEE <3)

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